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"ONE OF THE DREAM PLACES OF THE WORLD"

See page 120

SICKLE OR SWASTIKA ?

By

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"MY RUSSIAN VENTURE"

"YOUNG CHINA AND NEW JAPAN"

"IN DARKEST LONDON," ETC. ETC.

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SICKLE OR SWASTIKA ?

CHAPTER I

“ Can man be free if woman be a slave ? ”

THE most convinced supporter of Capitalism to-day must admit that there is something faulty in a system that postulates a percentage of permanent unemployment and a periodical destruction of what is called “ surplus ” wealth—wheat, coffee, etc., in order to retain its markets.

Two main solutions for these evils are before the world—Collectivism and Fascism, now operating in extreme forms in Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany. Minor suggestions or alternatives include Distributism with the establishment of a Peasant Proprietorship on the land and Guild Socialism controlling industry. The last named has never been tried out ; the first, even in countries largely agricultural like France, Poland and Holland, is accompanied by such severe unemployment that they are already the potential battle ground of the opposing forces—communal ownership, directed by elected bodies, and caste ownership, under a military dictatorship, that pervades and controls every section of human activity.

The Dutch have experienced a preliminary skirmish on the barricades of Amsterdam. Informed opinion in France, after the outbreak

for a song—pure silk stockings were six a penny—and the entire community, distracted for ready cash, were selling necessities and luxuries to greedy speculators for notes not worth the paper on which they were printed. A million marks for a theatre programme ; a billion for a theatre seat ; wagon loads for a drink or a meal. The agony of mind of the victims of this mad ramp must have been unendurable. It was bad enough for the spectator. Personally, the welter of currency paid over for an English pound made me feel indecent.

But in spite of financial insecurity, perhaps because of it, there was a gaiety about the City, febrile but attractive. People talked loudly, laughed easily. The restaurants were crowded and gourmets dined and wined for a mere matter of shillings, or even pence.

Berlin of the Nazis, 1933, I found had none of that glittering instability. There was excitement, tension and a certain hysterical fervour, but of a different quality ; the atmosphere was steeled with resistance and discipline.

The streets, day after day, were crowded with lorries packed with Brown Shirts. The detachments of Black Shirts, so often described, were on the march, and from the pavements old men and women watched, wondering and awe-stricken, and young girls shouted " Heil Hitler " with the best. The swastika was everywhere—on shops and houses, as an armlet or a button, on trams, omnibuses, motor-cars, even on the pavements—and with the swastika the eternal salute. In a café over coffee, in a store buying a pair of gloves, waiting for a train, queueing up for a cinema, the approach of a Nazi trooper irresistibly brought the arm up to the angle of eighty-five degrees and evoked the eternal greetings to the Chancellor.

But if the city were alive the hotels were almost empty. The vast halls and clean, comfortable

rooms where I was staying had a desolate aspect, only a few Americans and a group of British school teachers sharing with me the solicitude of a huge and well-trained staff. Business was distinctly bad, but the porter gave me a beaming welcome. A really remarkable man, with a shock of upstanding white hair and a bristly moustache, he was charged with electricity, and irresistibly I registered him as "Fuzzy." He spoke English fluently, and half a dozen languages besides, knew all about time tables, theatres and despatch of mails, and had an inexhaustible patience with the inane enquiries that the very atmosphere of an hotel seems to generate. He was sixty-eight years old, but looked less, and, like most of his confrères the world over, never forgot a face, and had a shrewd knowledge of political affairs. Fuzzy had queer blue eyes, with a slightly blurred look, as though they had seen things they did not wish to remember.

He leaned across his desk that first evening of my arrival and looked me up and down.

"You are a journalist?" he said, examining my passport, "and you will write articles for English newspapers?"

I agreed, and waited expectantly for what might follow. There was a grim intensity about Fuzzy which intrigued me.

"You will say many things about Hitler," he went on, "but you will please remember what I shall tell you? . . . Hitler is a common man—as I am a common man, and millions beside. He has known the sin of war and the curse of hunger. He has endured the humiliation of the peace, in dirt and degradation. He has been homeless, workless, without hope or pride—as we have been. But—" Fuzzy's blurred eyes suddenly shone—"Hitler has given us back our manhood and our self-respect; he has united common man with common man, and taken away our shame and the fear to live."

He paused. " You will not forget ? " he said.

I gave him my promise and, indeed, through all my experience of the brutish tyrannies and senseless oppressions which weighed down the selfless efforts of certain of the Nazis—his words remained. Always I thought of Hitler, not as the Chancellor of Germany, but as one who typifies the courage and the cruelty, the faith and the credulity, the endurance and the folly of the common man. . . .

I went out into the streets and explored the cafés. I looked for companionship ; I found desolation. There were hardly any customers and the waiters seemed nervous and apprehensive. Instructed by the Government to lend an attentive ear to the general conversation, they were divided between fear of disobeying the State and offending the rare customer.

It was a lonely pilgrimage that first night. Berlin had gone frugally to bed and all the establishments seemed equally remote, with hardly a woman to be seen. Feminine clienteles are not encouraged under the Hitler regime. I recall the first occasion when this was brought home to me. I was having coffee with a German newspaper woman when she suggested she'd give her soul for a smoke.

" But I dare not," she explained, " unless you keep watch ! "

It sounded incredible, but, as I discovered, it was actually true. She hid her cigarette behind a paper, while I looked out for Nazis, but in spite of some anxious moments when a troop of Brown Shirts peered at us inquisitively, she got through without mishap. In one restaurant, I remember, a girl who openly flaunted a cigarette was not so lucky. She had it snatched roughly from her mouth by a lusty young trooper, while a woman at the next table who presumed to produce a flap-jack

had her face scrubbed bare of powder, with painful results.

Dancing, also, was regulated, and I saw a graceful young couple warned off a café floor on the ground that the fox-trot is not Aryan, the waltz—with the exception of peasant choreography—being the only national movement. But even the waltz was rare. To the Brown Shirts life was real, life was earnest, and gaiety at a discount.

I discovered very soon that Nazi lack of humour juts out like a wall of black basalt, but I found also, underlying all their crude fanaticism, a spirit of sincerity and sacrifice among the rank and file. The Brown Shirts did not smoke or drink, and the money so saved from their scanty pay—a trooper gets a mark a day, with deduction for mess allowance—was offered for the cause on the Altar of Hitler. That same cause permits no division of worship. Then, as now, there is no means of living, outside the Nazi circles. Those who are not troopers join the Party which controls all the jobs, from responsible Government and commercial posts down to the right to sell newspapers on the streets. If you cannot conscientiously wear the swastika, you may starve. Meanwhile, though women may subscribe to the Party funds as non-acting members, swell the audience at meetings and applaud the speakers, they are debarred from committee membership or from any leading part in a public demonstration.

The Nazi attitude to women from the social point of view is frankly amazing; it is not that they stress the importance of woman in the home as wife and mother, a point of view with which no thinking person can disagree, but that they postulate the undesirability of any kind of mental training. It is to them a fundamental principle.

I realised this in an interview with a big blond politician of about thirty. I had called to enquire

as to woman's position in modern Germany. He gave it to me quite concisely :

" We don't want women with brains," he said. " We want Aryan babies ! "

The Nazi reaction to feminine status from every angle is reactionary. Following the ejection of Jewish doctors from all the hospitals and clinics, the Government threw out the female personnel. This, however, left the staffs so depleted that they were called back again until such time as the immediate male students should have taken their degree ; later, no woman medico will be eligible for a State appointment, though she may start in private practice. Debarred from hospital experience, however, the chance of success in such a case is problematical.

Legal women have been ruthlessly weeded out. One of Berlin's most brilliant divorce advocates, disbarred with hundreds of others, is now a telephone operator, on a starvation wage. Others even more unfortunate are trying to earn a few pfennigs at translation, typing, any of the Cinderella activities open to the female sex. This elimination presses cruelly on women of early middle-age who, as a result of the War, were forced into the labour market. Their husbands or fiancés killed, their family resources exhausted, they had to take up a calling or profession to exist. Now, when years of hard work and experience have brought them a modest security, they are flung on the scrap heap of a Society which refuses to recognise the law of contract and abrogates agreements with complete cynicism.

It has been decided that in State departments women over the marriage age may be employed in subordinate positions as typists, stenographers, etc., but they must have no responsibility or power, even to the extent of giving orders to an office boy ! These fortunate ones, however, are subject to

close scrutiny as to their genealogy. Only those who can show pure Aryan descent for three generations are eligible.

"I am in the greatest possible distress," said a delightful woman in one of the propaganda departments. "I have mislaid my paternal great-grandmother. If I cannot find her I may lose my job!"

This particular forebear came from a Silesian family before the Polish Partition, when registers were non-existent. Fortunately, my friend has fair hair with blue eyes, and in default of documentary evidence these traits were regarded as proof of Aryan blood and she kept her post. Had she been a brunette, economic disaster might have followed.

But, as one of the genealogical victims remarked to me: "In Germany a dish is not always served so hot as it is cooked," and already it has been found necessary to recall a small number of administrators of the inferior sex, whose knowledge untrained youth cannot immediately acquire. But wherever this has been done, though the woman practically takes the responsibility, she is actually and financially inferior to the male employee she advises. The underlying motive for this drastic replacement is, of course, the reinstatement of man as the economic and woman as the presiding genius of the home, a consummation devoutly to be wished for. But while such a rational arrangement must be generally applauded, the deliberate scrapping of middle-aged unmarried women who have qualified for their positions is fundamentally barbarian.

The big drapery stores have been obliged to turn out their women administrators, but here, as elsewhere, an ingenious compromise has been effected. The women still run their departments but at an assistant's, not a buyer's salary. A man

is the nominal head, and alas ! draws the increment attached to the position. This naturally assists female exploitation and helps to extend the disease it is designed to cure.

In industrialism the policy of redistribution has been more satisfactory. Working-class matrons have gladly left the factory for the home, and the girls are only too glad to give up their jobs in exchange for a marriage dowry. Here, however, an unexpected hitch has arisen. It has been found that in the textile, cigarette and electric filament trades male labour is not economic. Unaccustomed masculine fingers destroy more than they produce, and women workers have had to be brought back, pending the tactile training of young boys !

The dowry question is also most unsettled. It is not generally realised that one of the difficulties of the Hitler regime is that Nazi centres vary in different regulations and procedure. What is compulsory in one province may not be enforced in another. In Weimar, for instance, the Nazi Council have decided that a marriage portion can only be granted to those who pass not only a genealogical but a health test. Thus, a girl of pure Nordic blood may marry only if her family history be void of any trace of phthisis, epilepsy, alcoholism and the rest. Those who have a blur on their health escutcheon cannot claim a dot, and this restriction applies not only in the direct line, but includes collaterals—a bibulous aunt or consumptive cousin may prove fatal. Other provinces hold competitive examinations in which only the healthiest and most Nordic candidates get the matrimonial prize.

But while the law differs with locality, the general status of the German woman, socially and economically, has everywhere swung back to the Victorian era.



"A MARVELLOUS HEAD-DRESS, STRAIGHT FROM THE
SIXTEENTH CENTURY"

I had a lively experience of this at tea one afternoon. I had been asked to meet a number of representative professional woman and we were talking over general affairs when the door was flung open and quite unasked a Nazi official stalked in. He glared at us with such ferocity that insensibly every one grew silent—tea-cups were softly put into their saucers, and succulent cakes remained untouched. The politician took the centre of the room and fixing a baleful eye on me, made the following announcement :

"The State has no need of women in her councils. They must go to their nursery and their kitchen—and stay there."

"And suppose they haven't got a nursery or a kitchen of their own?" I asked innocently.

"They must go into someone else's," was the peremptory reply.

This in effect is what is happening. The authorities have closed down municipal and other lodging houses for women. Those who have no homes, relatives or friends, instead of occupying an independent bed must pay for accommodation among strangers, who frequently but not unnaturally are most unwilling to house them.

These hardships, however, do not press upon the young. I found youth triumphantly and sacrificially enthusiastic. There were none of those pathetic groups of unemployed that haunt our cities, staring at space with tragic eyes aching for work, morally and physically down at heel. Everywhere was bustle and activity, classes, gymnasiums, drill, meetings, labour camps engulfed all the compulsorily idle. Hitler never seriously diminished the percentage of unemployed, the majority having been put to occupational rather than productive work—the making of roads, the reclaiming of swamps, at forestation and the building of barracks. But though this did not increase the

material wealth of the nation, it had a miraculous spiritual regeneration.

I shall never forget my first impact with daily life in the centre of the capital. Crowds of civilians were going to business or the Party Offices. Young men were full of energy ; old men were employed as messengers in State departments or as porters in business houses. I was conscious of a return of masculine vigour, a sudden resurgence of faith. As with the young men, so with the young women. Hitler had given them the hope of a husband and home in place of factory or office life. The reaction had stimulated their patriotism to a fever heat of Hitler worship.

The marriage impulse is strengthened by the prohibition of boy and girl comradeship. The Wander Birds no longer troop joyously over the country—camping together on the mountain, singing through the valley ; among the Hitler jugend there was and still is segregation—boys go with boys, and girls with girls. Sex attraction is thus increased, and where lads of the village used to spend their evening in sport they now keep tryst with Gretchen, no longer in shorts with bobbed head, but wearing demure skirts, plaited tresses and innocent of lip-stick and powder. The numerical disparity between the sexes—eleven women to ten men—is the same in Germany as in England, but the difference is not so great among the proletariat who, as in most countries, mate young. It is with the unmarried intelligensia that the shoe pinches. Thrown out of the professions and debarred from commercial advancement, what can these women do ? . . .

Hitherto, while I had felt the psychological regeneration of the people, I had not come in contact with any definite attempt at social reconstruction. This I was to find at the agricultural labour camps. I had heard the usual

divergent accounts of these places. It was said they were recruited by forced labour, under the harshest conditions and alternatively that the trainees were the pampered pets of the Party. With some difficulty and the filling up of many forms, I obtained permission to visit a Women's Centre some forty miles from Berlin, and on a lovely summer morning I set out, escorted by an ex-professor of sociology who had been deposed from her chair at the University and lived by translating for the Ministry of Propaganda. We were accompanied by a young reporter, who wished to interview me, but as his English was as indifferent as my German we had to rely on the Professor's interpretation. I don't think it could be regarded as literal and I have always been curious as to what I was made to say ! She was a large woman with fierce teeth and a floppy hat that kept falling over one eye. Her opening remark was not entirely congenial.

"Why," said she, between the jolts of the taxi over an incomparably bad road, "why did the English join France's black troops in the War ? . . ."

I deprecated the suggestion, but she was not to be appeased.

"You betrayed the European culture that we Aryans had preserved. Also—" she fixed me with her one visible eye—"you deprived us of victory. We could have beaten France with one hand but for the blockade."

This was one of the few occasions that I met the emotional aftermath of 1914-1918. It is the peace that Germany resents to-day. But the Professor's attitude of yesterday was understandable.

She had lost her man at the Battle of the Marne, and now her position was gone also, so that one could make allowance for her bitterness. When

she went on to say, however, that the repository of Western civilisation was vested in the Reich, I felt compelled to ask why modern Germany should adopt a Chinese symbol of sovereignty. But the ex-professor was not open to discussion.

"If," she said, "the swastika is used in China, the Chinese must have borrowed it from us. It is an ancient Aryan sign."

Over and over again I came up against this same brick wall of blind assertion, against which discussion knocks in vain. Press propaganda, which rigorously excludes criticism of any kind, foreign or domestic, acts as a dope so that the majority accept unquestioning the most amazing suggestions.

On the outskirts of a charming village we found a long rambling white-walled building, overgrown with roses and honeysuckle, where eighty women and girl trainees—drawn from every class—are housed. It is compulsory for all university students to spend their long vacation at these centres, of which some two hundred are already established, and this social mixture with its consequent interchange of customs and ideas is one of the most admirable things in modern Germany. Long fields rich with fragrant hay sloped down to a river, acres of cabbages, beets, potatoes stretched to the sky line, and everywhere, hoeing, digging, reaping, were companies of women all in print frocks, and glowing with health and energy. The day is divided into shifts. In the morning units are detailed to farm and house work, or for instruction in child welfare. Beginning at six, the midday meal is followed by an hour's break, when routine recommences, goes on till six and is followed by classes in politics, needlework, foreign languages and singing. Then comes rest and recreation, a simple evening meal and bed.

The camp leader, a quiet capable woman in the

early thirties, handed me over to a young Brunhilde of twenty, a lovely creature, with pale gold hair, brown skin and eyes like mountain lakes. She had been an Exchange student in America, but spoke untainted English, and, possessing a delicious sense of fun, was able to compare the ideas of the older generation with those of her own.

"Of course," she said—we were walking apart from the rest in an avenue of apple and pear trees—"we women feel that Hitler has rather let us down. We worked for him with all our souls, and the first thing he did was to forbid us to take any part in Nazi organisation, and to chuck us out of the professions. Take me for instance, and hundreds like me. I believe my country has a great future, and I want to help in her reconstruction. I think I can help—I can speak French and Italian as well as English, and I have passed most of my law examinations. I was going to be an advocate—but now," she shrugged her pretty shoulders, "what is there left? We must take no part in politics. We are excluded from any but subordinate positions in business, education or economics. Socially we are of importance merely as breeders. We are to bear children at the word of command. . . . Do you see that woman over in the field?" She pointed to a slim figure with a thin eager face and intense eyes. "She was the head mistress of what you would call a high school. She has taken the highest possible degrees and was most successful with her pupils. She was discharged to make room for a married man, without hope or chance of getting another job. She came to the camp thinking she might get employment as a farm hand when she's through her training. There's only that or domestic service left to her. Her family are terribly poor so she could not save."

Brunhilde paused to wave to a group of pretty

haymakers in linen overalls, spreading like a flock of starlings over the field.

"It's a pleasant life, but it leads nowhere—for women like that anyway. You see farming is a seasonal occupation. If you're married and on the land you can carry on. But there is very little room for casual labour, and there are more servants than situations. Most people can't afford to keep a maid, though the Government grants the employer a special remission of income tax. But my friend isn't likely to be engaged as cook or parlour maid, she is not young enough. When winter comes and the camp shuts I don't know what will happen to her. There is no hope of her getting a husband."

The slim figure straightened itself, the deep eyes smiled a greeting to Brunhilde. Her story, a ghastly comment on the post-war situation, hurt one to the quick. No such tragedy could await my beautiful young guide—she would always have plenty of suitors !

"My father insists I talk nonsense about wanting to help the country. He says I should marry—at once. But I don't want to marry unless I am in love. And I'm not ; I've never met the man I would choose for a husband. Love is terribly important—I think—and until I do love, why shouldn't I help Germany ? "

"What about organising schemes to decrease unemployment ? "

"Women must not organise in Germany," she answered, "and if I took up sick nursing or tried charitable work I should only be doing some one else out of a paid job——"

"Any chance of your getting away ? " I asked her.

"Not a hope. My father would not hear of it. He regrets that he let me go to the States."

We decided after a long discussion that her one

opportunity of escape would be through journalism. Her knowledge of foreign lands and languages, if she practised sex humility and accepted drudgery, might get her work on a national paper, and with luck she might gravitate to foreign capitals. She stands to me as significant of German womanhood to-day. Quick-brained, cultured, with steady nerves and a superb physique, her country relegates her to a domestically cloistered life. Wives and mothers must *stay* in the nursery and the kitchen ! Her knowledge of life, her sympathy and understanding cannot be used for her sisters' help. Women have been swept off the magistrates' bench, are no longer factory inspectors, or prison visitors. To me one of the most salient results of women's exclusion from civic life is the Government pronouncement as to crime. Gaols, it is said, have been too merciful, corporal punishment has been rare and the criminal has been given a chance to find his way back to normal life. Now this regime of pampering is to end. Prison is to become synonymous with terror, so that the guilty will prefer death to a return.

This extrusion from national affairs, however, hits only the educated classes. For women manual workers there are considerable advantages in the regime. In the first place, the Labour Camps bring about a social fusion hitherto undreamt of.

"Until I came here," said the farm nymph, "I knew nothing about hard work. I never dreamt how your bones can ache or that your head goes stupid after hours and hours in the fields. I'd played tennis and hockey pretty hard and never turned a hair, but digging and scrubbing and washing clothes is quite another story. I was so dog-tired at first, so full of pain that I couldn't sleep. The working girls used to jeer at me and say I was pretending, but"—she turned to me with a radiant smile—"it taught me an awful lot ;

it was good to have an actual experience of roughing it so that I could realise what it means to be a proletarian. . . . I've taught them something in my turn. My room-mates used to scream with laughter because I brushed my hair and cleaned my teeth night and morning, and had a bath whenever possible—we've not too much hot water here—but after a bit they did the same and manicured their nails and grew quite fussy over their lingerie. If Hitler has done nothing else, he's broken down class barriers. I should never have known the workers if I hadn't come here."

At this moment the ex-professor summoned me to admire the educational syllabus of a neighbouring college, so my talk with Brunhilde had to end ; I often think of her, wide-eyed and glowing, the incarnation of youth, loveliness and strength. Nazi rule has brought her and her generation fresh contacts, establishing between the prosperous and the working classes an understanding born of labour and laughter mutually shared and enjoyed ; but she is debarred from putting such knowledge to practical use.

The interior of the camp was very like the training centres in England where girls are taught cooking, laundry and the rest. The dormitories were airy, beautifully clean and nicely furnished. Family photographs decorated the walls, and flowers stood on the tables.

It was past sunset when we left and the camp had given itself over to song. The clear sweet voices floated over meadow and woodland—the voices of the Hitler young !

Back in Berlin the streets were blocked by Nazis on the march. It was the eve of an inspection of the Brown Shirts, and the Black Shirts, the *élite* of the Storm Troops, at the Flying Ground—two hundred thousand devotees pledged to the death !

CHAPTER II

“ . . . all cried with one accord,
Thou art King, and law, and Lord ”

BERLIN was early astir next morning for the great rally. Traffic was held up for troopers, omnibuses were forbidden, and only taxis and motor-cars were allowed to come within a certain radius of the Flying Ground. Fuzzy got me off by eight o'clock, with a map and strict instructions as to route, cab fare and the rest.

It was an impressive spectacle ; a vast crowd of onlookers stood in serried ranks—middle-aged men, their wives and daughters, young mothers with small Hitler cubs, who lorded it over little girls denied the right of wearing uniform, pretty women and old grandmothers. The tramp of feet, a short sharp word of command and massed battalions of men trained to the last inch went through intricate evolutions amid a cascade of shouts and a forest of saluting arms. Round and round the parade ground went these human war engines barking their loyalty. It was on this occasion that an English Padre got into trouble for failing to enunciate Heil Hitler clearly. The poor man suffered from throat trouble and the continuous greeting required had so quenched his voice that he could hardly be heard. I was wedged in between two abnormally large women, with such vast lung power that my gentle little squeak went unproved, though I registered muscular testimony to the Chancellor's greatness unremittingly. Just behind me was a young man with a scholarly face and an English accent which permeated his most forceful Heil.

The troops, the people and the children swayed and dominated by an idolatry unquestioning and fanatical, fixed their eyes on a space-filling Hitler image. I had seen the adoration of Lenin in the U.S.S.R., the reverence with which peasants and workers on the march paid homage to the statues of the great man which tower over town and country. But Communist fervour paled completely before the frenzied acclamation of the Germans. There was something truly terrifying in their abasement. They offered up their souls and bodies at the altar of their faith. Indeed, to me, Hitler worship is a variant of the Mahommedan religion in which God is Germany, Hitler his prophet, and those who do not accept him are put to the stick—the lethal alternative that serves the rank and file.

Round and round, up and down, sweeping in circles, forming squares, the flesh and blood missiles were tireless in their ecstasy. And behind this microcosm of a vaster force I seemed to hear the tramping of Nazi millions, lacking only immediate military equipment to become one of the most formidable fighting forces in the world.

The hours passed. *Haus-fraus* produced prodigious sausage rolls and succulent ham sandwiches and distributed them to their families. Nazi street vendors walked round with lemonade, and still the Brown Shirts and the Black Shirts marched in surprising perfection of rhythm. The vast audience munched and swallowed and Heiled and sat, and not a laugh or a smile disturbed the queer set passion of their faces.

It was not European, this wrapt impassiveness, but something from the desert, dark with blood, sullen with untempered heat. The huge red banners with giant swastikas passed and repassed. The last time I had seen those gorgeous oriflames was at a National Festival on the banks of the

Yangtze when Young China linked up the old panoply with the new spirit and, amid pomp and circumstance, a vast populace united in enthusiasm. I recalled the smiling faces of the students, the jokes of the coolies, the ebb and flow of spontaneous emotion. But here there was no tide of feeling, no cleansing laughter that casts out evil and cold pride. At any moment I felt those wheeling figures might charge against civilisation and trample a pulped and battered Europe under their feet.

It was after the tension had become almost unbearable that the wireless got busy in a religious service. Loud-speakers from all sides of the field suddenly broke forth. I realised they were chanting something of a religious nature, but I could not understand the reiteration of the Chancellor's name. The scholarly individual enlightened my perplexity.

"They are reciting the Twenty-third Psalm," he explained. "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters."

"But how does Hitler come in?" I asked.

"He has assumed the position of the Deity in the Nazi version," was his answer. "Hitler is my shepherd: Hitler leadeth me beside still waters: Hitler restoreth my soul—it is an obsession with the Nazis."

Nor was this all. After the tumult, the voice of the Prelate of Prussia came over the radio. He was preaching a sermon, and watching the faces of the crowd, I was sensible of a divided reaction. Some looked ferociously pleased and nodded applause; others seemed scared and the women even a little shocked. Once more my neighbour translated:

"Every two thousand years," said the Head of the Lutheran Church, "a Redeemer is born into the world to save mankind. Just as Jesus came upon

earth, to-day we have Hitler, who taketh away the sins of the world and grants us his peace."

I shall never forget the almost maniacal shouts of triumph that greeted the asserveration.

"Do they believe it?" I asked my informant. He had spent his youth in Germany and had a real understanding of the national psychology.

"This particular crowd, yes. But they are largely Berliners and impregnated with Prussian materialism. The Bavarians do not swallow any such nonsense."

This at any rate was reassuring. The thought of an entire nation given over to spiritual megalomania made my brain reel, but that the ruling section of the country centred in the capital should revert to tribal worship was sufficiently staggering. There was no mistaking the genuineness of the belief, at that moment the whole concourse would, I felt, have marched into the fires of Moloch to prove that Hitler is the living God. It was the combination of physical force and mental credulity that to me was so sinister. Germany was not only *uber alles* in this world, but through Hitler would take national precedence in the next.

The tumult and the cheering had touched a note of almost screaming hysteria when the reaction came. Since early morning rumours had been current that the Leader himself might suddenly appear and everyone was keyed to expectation. Gradually, however, it became recognised that he was not coming, but the absence of their idol, if anything, speeded up crowd worship. And then without flourish of trumpets or preliminary wireless blast a soldierly figure rode into the square. All eyes turned to him. A tremor of excitement ran through the close ranks. "Roehm!" shouted the Nazis. "Roehm!" Their voices lost the note of mystic adoration and took on a tone of personal acclamation. This was the man who had hammered

the raw material of German manhood into the finished product of the Brown Army, the man who a few months later was to be shot in his bed by Hitler's own hands. These soldiers were the work of his hands, his will and that superb sense of discipline which did not in the least control his personal life. Here again in the public estimate of Roehm I found that likeness to the darker East which runs throughout the Prussian Nazis.

The Mongol stock from which the Prussians sprang is still persistent in the race and must be, I think, responsible for their insistence on Aryan blood. It is the inversion of a sense of inferiority which drives them to a crude violence which they mistake for strength. Roehm was a fine soldier and a sex pervert, the one known as openly as the other. That morning on the Templer Hoferfeld the taut figure with the thin lips and carnal eyes was recognised not only as a great military chief, but as the High Priest of a sect in whose sex rituals man played every part—to the further deglorification of woman.

Roehm took the salute, cast a swift eye over his battalions and rode off amidst thunderous applause.

After that the proceedings seemed to drag. . . .

I left the Flying Ground just before three, oppressed, almost stunned by contact with such terrific herd sentiment. At any moment I felt the Nazis might become actual as well as potential Robots and, needing the touch of a more individual universe, I went to a little eating-house under the arches of a railway station near Frederichstrasse. The district is well to do, but small shops flourish in this particular spot and all of them cater for the working class and provide extremely good food at very low prices. Compared with an hotel tariff, my special haunt was amazingly cheap. A bock that at the "Adlon" will cost 1 mark 50, under the arches can be had for 10 pfennigs; a cup of black

coffee 1 mark at a restaurant is priced at 12 pfennigs, with all sorts of food, at a similar reduction. Tram drivers and conductors, railway porters, postmen, all sorts of Government and municipal employees of the lower ranks, go there to eat. Most of them of middle-age, many had been in the War and spoke English very fluently. I learned many things from these men. Hard-working, decent-living, frugal and neat, they inspired respect and admiration, and like my friend Fuzzy, regarded Hitler as the common man *in excelsis*, but were not entirely in line with his political programme. I was especially anxious to hear their criticisms and, gradually, as we grew more friendly, they began to speak quite openly. They dissented from the break-up of the Trades Unions and the hunting down of suspected Communists.

"Half the Communists so-called belong to the unemployed who want what we all want, a good day's work for a good day's pay," said a thick-set little porter. "Some of 'em talk a lot of hot air, but mostly it is only talk. Idleness and despair take the sense out of a man, but very few of them mean any harm. Only," he glanced round to see if anyone were listening, "they're a bit pig-headed. If they were sensible they'd join the Party, and have the first chance of a job, but they won't wear the swastika, so they get it in the neck."

"And then," an older man took up the story, "maybe it's a case of a private grudge. An S.A. trooper will round up someone he has a down on—it's not the fault of the Party, just human nature, you know."

No one suggested that there could be anything radically wrong with a system under which suspects can be punished without the formulation of any specific charge; the general feeling on the matter was that, though hard, this sort of discipline was essential if Hitler's schemes for a new Germany

were to go through. For though there was criticism at the little eating-place under the arches, the beloved Leader was never held to blame. In his name, not by his will, were these things done.

A labourer with a hoarse voice told me—quite impartially—a rather dreadful story : “ The widow of a pal of mine killed in the War,” said he, “ has two sons. One is a steady young fellow, the other a harum-scarum blighter who wants to set the world on fire. No harm in him, you know, but too much to say. The Nazis got wind of him, but before they caught him, he had left his home and made tracks for another place. They searched his room, found some Communist papers and asked where he had gone. His mother couldn’t tell them—he had been cute enough not to give her his address.” The speaker paused.

“ What then ? ” I asked.

“ She said she didn’t know, but they didn’t believe her . . . she disappeared. I haven’t heard of her since.”

This cryptic statement, as I subsequently learnt, signified that the woman had been taken to a Brown House to be beaten—probably to death. At the time of which I write, the Brown Houses, or unofficial Nazi penitentiaries, were full of victims. Without a warrant, or, indeed, any legal procedure, the local braves would swoop on suspects and drag them off. I heard from eye-witnesses ghastly stories of men and women thrashed with india-rubber canes until their stomachs—the chief point of attack—were literally broken. Some of these human wrecks were occasionally traced to hospitals where, generally, they died, others lingered on in agony in the Brown Houses, or were carted to concentration camps. The more fortunate suspects were put under protective arrest by friendly police and kept in gaol for an indeterminate period. The word “ protective ” does not actually apply to the

accused, but to the State, against which they are held to be machinating. But though they suffered loss of liberty, their bodies, in these circumstances, remained whole.

But while my friends were ready to discuss many things, on the question of the Reichstag fire they were impervious. I never could quite make out whether the people have really swallowed the version of a Communist plot or are afraid to appear in the slightest degree dubious. It was the one point on which I always drew blank. Friends and acquaintances in every class always relapsed into a frozen silence. It was like talking to figures of glass—one could get no reactions.

Fear, as in most cases of cruelty, is obviously an actuating cause of Nazi barbarism. Fear and a kind of emotional ecstasy at being lifted from the grinding burden of inferiority that Hitler took from his fellows. But though, in my talks with working men of all types, there was a steady disapproval of these outrages, none of them held the Führer in any way responsible. Indeed, in all classes, at this time, I found the attitude to the Chancellor one of worship. The workmen, in a more sober way, were as fanatical as the Storm Troopers. If faith could have helped Hitler, he would have moved mountains.

When, however, I tried to find out the methods by which it was hoped reforms would be carried through, I found myself against a blank wall. Somehow or other, the Leader would do all that he had promised. But how, outside discipline, this would be accomplished, no one knew. It was not their business to know. They waited in a kind of blind ecstasy for the miracle to happen. Delay in carrying out the National Socialist programme could not be ascribed to him. He had promised land for all ! It was the Junkers who prevented the splitting up of the big estates ; the big industrialists



“WORN EVERY SUNDAY AND ON FÊTE DAYS”

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who stopped fair play for small shopkeepers ; the Jews who maintained the high price of food. Not that there was any idea that these combined forces could eventually withstand the Revolution. At the waving of his wand, opposition to Hitler would fall down. So sure indeed was their belief that very few of those I met attacked the reactionaries. It was only against the rich Jews that the community railed.

Of anti-Semitism itself, I found little trace among the Berlin workers. Among the unemployed of all classes it was a different matter. Nazi propaganda preached that the Jewish community as a class were responsible for the lack of jobs, and once in the Nazi fighting force, the out of work found opportunity of testifying to the hate which those in regular situations did not share. My friends under the arches told me of Jews who had lost their homes and their work and like pariah dogs only ventured out at night to rake the gutters or beg assistance from their Gentile friends. It is, however, dangerous for a German to help even a starving Jew.

"I do not ask for my capital," said a once prosperous Jewish merchant to a Nazi Group, "all I ask is that I may take two hundred pounds from the bank and leave the country."

"You may go," was the answer, "but you go penniless."

"But without money how can I earn my living?"

The answer was decisive.

"Starve!"

Revolution inevitably breeds tragedy, and martyrs everywhere die for their faith. But I have not met anything more sad than the case of the young German couple who, perfervid Nazis, suddenly found themselves debarred from serving the cause. A brilliant, ardent young girl, the

daughter of a famous general, threw up her career as a musician and exchanged her violin for a typewriter to tap out Nazi propaganda by the mile. Her fiancé, already prominent in the Party, worked exceedingly hard and looked forward to an assured political career. They were shortly to have been married, when the blow fell. I had been introduced to Fräulein Marguerite by my friend the ex-barrister and had listened to her flaming enthusiasm with genuine interest.

"Of course it means—it must mean—personal sacrifice, and many, many of my women friends have had to give up their careers. But," the young face grew tense, touched with a flame of devotion—"that doesn't matter, it's not the individual but the nation that counts."

Her father, a kindly Bavarian, listened with me, patted her head amiably and asked if and when I thought England would follow Germany's lead? I was still smiling at the idea when the General was summoned to the phone. Sensing a family matter I departed, to learn the next day what had happened.

Marguerite's father had been served with the usual papers calling on him to prove his daughter was of pure Nordic descent, as otherwise she was not eligible to type Nazi circulars—a drop of non-Aryan blood would defame the keys! The General had not returned the document and had ignored further requests, until a peremptory telephone demand brought him to heel. Alas for Marguerite! Her mother, the General's first wife, had been the offspring of a German husband and a Jewish wife. There was no escaping the taint. The girl had given all she had to the cause, but even so she was outcast; more, her sweetheart was faced with the choice of giving her up or resigning his position. To the honour of the young man, he refused to break his engagement. It was Marguerite who did

that ; moreover, she left Germany and said a long good-bye to all her hopes. . . .

It was just after I had heard the news that I ran into an old little Jew in the Friedrichstrasse. He tremblingly extended his open palm towards me apprehensively glancing round. He looked very ill, dreadfully hungry and horribly afraid. Feeling at the moment that he and I might both be beaten, I gave him a trifle and realised that I was in a very mad world.

But it was not only Jews who begged from me ; even in the Unter den Linden I was discreetly approached by German youths and older men. Clean, well-brushed, their threadbare garments had a forlorn respectability. They did not wear the swastika and obviously were not members of the Nazi Party, otherwise they would have been found an occupational outlet, in Labour Camps or propaganda. These unfortunates are the left-overs of the revolution. Politically or temperamentally they are alien to the Hitler regime and rather than join the machine prefer to suffer. Silence indeed is their one escape. To apply for work would turn the searchlight on their previous history. To ask for unemployment pay would be equally fatal.

If you are not with Hitler you are against him and must be exterminated.

These cases, however, were a small minority, the overwhelming majority of people with whom I came in contact—in every class—were indisputably for the new order.

Fidelity to Hitler, however, had not brought prosperity. Food prices even in 1933 were dear and in the shops and markets averaged quite fifty per cent more than in England, while hotels and restaurants proved a hundred per cent more expensive. The portions of food served, however, were of a Gargantuan size, my request for a veal cutlet inevitably bringing a joint sufficient for an

entire family! Only with the greatest difficulty could I persuade the kindly and attentive waiter that it was not my will but my capacity that refused the succulent dishes piled up before me. Clothes also cost more than in England, but the extreme industry, domestic neatness and personal pride of the people seem to make it a point of honour to camouflage poverty by mending and remending rags.

But, and this is one of the salient differences between London and Berlin, rents are cheap, and accommodation better. It is a strange and melancholy fact that Great Britain is the only country in Europe where ground rent persists. In France, Germany and the rest a house is sold or let outright without any charge upon the land on which it stands. Here, as we know, a man or a company who has done nothing to develop a housing estate or a shopping centre, can profit by the initiative and industry of those who have exploited the resources of the neighbourhood.

I found the poorer districts of Berlin shabby but not tumbledown. The workers have been spared the rack-renting which makes an acre of slum property in London far more profitable than the same area in a fashionable quarter, and though the buildings in the German capital are sometimes dark, and sanitary arrangements are not of the most modern kind, overcrowding is nothing like so extreme as in our own districts. I explored the back streets of Berlin as I explored the plague spots of Bethnal Green and Westminster, but I never found a family of thirteen living in a damp cellar or crammed into an attic with a leaking roof, and without adequate water or lavatory accommodation.

The cheapness of rent as compared with London enables the workers to subsist even on low wages—though the all-important fact that the German

woman is a good cook, and generally rejoices in an efficient stove, is a contributory cause. Apart from these advantages, home life in Nazi Berlin cannot be regarded as peaceful or assured. At any moment a group of Brown Shirts may arrive and put through a search for dubious literature—which ranges from Communist Tracts through Karl Marx down to the mildest form of Peace pamphlet. A benevolent old gentleman, a member of the Society of Friends, who had left the North of England years before to settle in Berlin, was sent to prison for harbouring Sir Norman Angell's book against War, and this although he had dispensed thousands of pounds subscribed by the Quakers to relieve German distress. On another occasion a maiden lady—German this time—was fined for calling her cat after the French Marshal Joffre, on the ground that she was guilty of anti-national sympathy. Jew hunting, even in the most impossible places, is perpetual. It is said that even the headquarters of Goering were invaded on the ground that a group of Jewish conspirators had gained access to the precincts and were planning a *coup d'état*. According to a popular version of the story current among the students, the hall-porter informed the search party that the Minister was in hospital for an operation. His Excellency's chest was being broadened that there might be room for him to wear more medals! From Bavaria came the tale of the four Jews who had been expelled from Palestine because they had an Aryan great-grandmother, but even Berlin sniggered!

Meanwhile, though they have been routed from commerce—the big stores have been notified that they must shed their Jewish directorates and staffs—turned out of professions and the schools, barred from the theatre, the opera and the cinema, the old Hebrew control of Finance remains unshaken. Not only are the banks under Jewish control, but I

should say quite seventy per cent of the employees are non-Christian. It amazed me to find in the Dresdener Bank, and others equally influential, cashier after cashier palpably semitic. I asked the reason for this seeming tolerance repeatedly, but the question remained unanswered.

"The Leader does his best," was as far as I could get ; "we must be patient."

Nevertheless the non-Aryan grip remains, nor does it seem likely that even the most rigorous baiting and denunciation will loosen it. I discussed the situation with an American commercialist who had settled in the German capital thirty years before.

"Germany cannot get rid of Jewish finance, any more than Great Britain, France or Italy. The whole business is too international. The banks in your country, however, have a strong national control. Here the Jews have far more power. Hitler tried to kick them out, but to do so effectively he would have had to collapse the whole financial framework. So he has to grin and bear them—in the banks at any rate. The Nazis compensate themselves by hoofing them out of every other walk of life—some hoofs !" . . .

I felt it was now time that I should visit some of the Labour Camps for the male Hitler youth. It is not easy, however, to gain admission to these places and it was not until I had spent an hour in intensive telephoning that I got on the right track. Eventually I was given an appointment for five o'clock with an official at the Press Department of the Foreign Office. I turned up to time but the attaché was not there. A clerk explained, however, that he would be back in an hour's time, further than that we could not go owing to our mutual linguistic ignorance. I decided to wait and see the thing through, and for the next forty minutes I sat in an apartment which, with its bare walls and austere

chairs, was like a railway station with an incessant passenger traffic. Young men in Brown Shirts brought packets of books and papers, young men in Brown Shirts took them away. Hitler cubs weighed in with evening papers, elderly men with swastikas alternately deposited and removed parcels of literature. The place was a hive of occupational energy. The majority of the callers I gathered were employed in offices and elsewhere, but on their journeyings through the city, they distributed Nazi pabulum and lined up after hours for voluntary work.

The effect of that stream of unremitting effort was unescapable, in and out, out and in, the human tide flowed on. The ocean of propaganda thus released was enough to swamp the country. Only in Soviet Russia had I seen anything to equal it. The Communist Party, however, not only preach the national gospel, but translate it into physical effort, making roads, laying railway tracks, swooping down on a left-over job or some pressing improvement. The Nazi Party otherwise directs its energies, arranging meetings, distributing the printed word, concentrating on platform rather than physical energy. . . .

The last caller, a short fat little tub of a man, heiled his way out of the office. The Press Attaché, cosmopolitan and smart, arrived and most courteously sent me to another department on the other side of the Wilhelmstrasse.

I visited at least six Ampts—the word to me suggests an electrically driven hive—before I found the right one. The official in charge was bald, genial, and spoke a fluent but mystic English. I did not understand a word of what he said, and too diffident to fall back on pantomime or to try French, I smiled and waited. He clicked his heels and waited also. And then in a mild, patient voice, his typist, relegated to an obscure corner, explained

in English that a party of teachers and students from Canada and the States were to make a tour of some of the Labour Camps, and would start from the Ampt the following morning at ten o'clock precisely. She handed me a card of invitation and returned to her corner. In a burst of vocal friendliness her lord and master showed me out.

Experience told me that the next day would be strenuous, and wishing for a little relaxation I decided to go to the theatre. Now I used to regard Berlin's taste as cultured and her productions as first-class, and one very good reason for this was that a play of which I am part author had been blessed with a long run to packed houses ! I went to see the agent responsible for the show to find out what was on. The office, miles away from the centre, was in one of the pleasantest districts imaginable, with wide avenues, leafy trees and charming little cafés. Happily the Nazi puritans have not succeeded in damning all café life though they have reduced the revenue from beer by enforced abstinence !

My friend, Berlin born and bred, was very gloomy. " Good shows ? " he said. " Good morally, oh, yes, plenty. But otherwise——"

I found that dramatically Germany had become early Victorian. Problem plays, sex plays, revolutionary plays, plays of ideas were banned. No more Ibsen, Strindberg or Shaw, no more resurgent daughters, recalcitrant sons or marriage triangles, man must be master in his own house, and only those plays which crushed the would-be feminist to powder were tolerable. Farces, of the most inane type, dug up from a stage limbo of fifty years ago were also permitted. For the rest, Nazi propaganda drama was welcome—though not a box-office draw—with occasional Goethe and the more warlike of Shakespeare's works. At the moment, however, both " G " and " S " were off,

but I was given seats for any of the others I preferred !

The cinema trade was in the same case. Jewish studios, producers, artists and capitalists had been ejected, and the industry practically ruined ! But though few national themes had been screened since the débacle, the showing of foreign films was frowned on. *Cavalcade* among others had been banned on the ground that it was a pacifist production calculated to diminish the glory of war. The industry under these staggering blows has suffered terribly, but to my mind a certain compensating advantage has been won by the rank and file. All film artists engaged for crowd work, small parts or principals have to be registered. Only those whose names are so recorded can be employed, under pain of fine or imprisonment. This eliminates the possibility of society people taking the bread out of hungry mouths by filming—in expensive dresses and at their own cost—for the fun of the thing. Thus a most discreditable form of blacklegging is prevented, and those who earn their living by the screen are not crowded out. The same rule is applied to the theatre, and though it makes it more difficult for a talented aspirant to get a chance, it does protect the legitimate artist from unfair competition.

Apart from this wholly good thing the German stage like the cinema is in a dreary way. I sat through two acts of a farce that, ancient in the pre-War era, had grown patches of hoary fungus in the meantime. It concerned a husband who, suspicious of his wife, disguised himself as a cab-driver and always contrived to be engaged by her men friends. The friends chased him and each other out of cupboards and under beds in the approved fashion, but the House, sparsely dotted with hefty *bourgeois*, did not laugh, though the company struggled hard to give life and colour to

a damp mass of amorphous words and meaningless action.

I did not wait until the end, but went on to a cinema, where I sat next to a pretty young person who in good American told me she was a manicurist at a beauty parlour. They were showing a History of the Nazi Movement, and the place was crammed. The photography was alive, the production ragged in parts and obviously amateur, was reinforced by the immense *élan* of the crowd, all of them, as my neighbour explained, members of the Nazi Party and "shot" on the parade ground. There was little story and less individual action; apart from the crowd work, the whole thing was actually and literally smothered by propaganda. The microphone staggered and almost split under the impact of "Heils" punctuated by excerpts from the Leader's speeches.

Everyone stamped and shouted when Hitler came on the screen. I grew a little tired of his invoking hand, his falling lock of hair, but even on a talkie he was impressive.

A non-smoker, non-drinker who does not eat meat, already legends cluster thick about his name. The little manicurist told me a typically sentimental story—I heard it many times, with trifling variations—as the explanation of Hitler's ascetic life. As a hot-blooded and attractive youth he had a passionate affair with an aristocratic maiden. But her father forbade the marriage and sent the girl beyond the lover's reach. The poor thing did not long survive the separation, for unable to see her Adolf, she just drooped and died!

"Since then," said my little friend, "he's never looked at a woman!" . . .

The talkie ended with a Nazi salute. The Horst Wessel song blaring from an orchestrophone, played the audience out. I asked the little manicurist to have coffee with me, and as we

talked, Mimi—as she was called—explained that she was engaged to be married, but owing to a bibulous uncle she had not applied for her dot, as it would disgrace her Fritz if she were refused. By next year, however, she would have saved two hundred marks on which they could buy some furniture. She was paid somewhere about fifteen shillings a week, working over ten hours a day with occasional infinitesimal tips. She manicured all sorts and conditions of nails, Nazi and otherwise—kind, cruel, hard, soft, smooth, glistening and serrated. She dreamt of them sometimes she said, all red and clawing. She was so tired of them she had tried to get a job as a maid. But the pay was less, the hours longer, and so with the thought of Fritz and the furniture to spur her on she went back to the beauty parlour by day, half her sister's bed at night and short rations all the while. At one time, she told me, there was talk of a Trade Union for manicurists and beauty parlour workers. But that was all over. . . .

I watched her down the street—the slim figure—she was the modern Berlin type—trim and upright in a black dress, her fair hair curling under a demure hat.

“ And what,” I asked myself and Fuzzy, “ has the Nazi regime done for Mimi and millions like her ? ”

Fuzzy smiled and suggested I should have a glass of hock, a ham sandwich and bed. . . .

I took his advice !

CHAPTER III

“ . . . Winds and trees and streams, and all things common ”

I WAS early at the Ampt next morning. Tradition has it that the German sense of punctuality is precise and I had visions of being left *solus* on the pavement if I were even a minute late. I need not have worried. Propaganda to the immediate Berliner is more than punctuality, and for half an hour after the scheduled time of departure we were harangued with facts and figures—all a little camouflaged as to imports, exports, unemployment and agriculture. There were only two Britishers in the party of forty, besides myself, an ex-army officer passionately pro-Nazi, and my acquaintance of the Flying Ground. The others, American and Canadian, were school teachers and tourists. We were informed that the camps were right out in the country and that we should not get back till late in the afternoon, and some of the party had brought vast mounds of sausage, beef and bread and butter to fortify themselves upon the way. I travelled light, however. I always believe in finding provisions as I go along, though outside the cities food, other than bread, was none too plentiful.

Seven hundred Labour Camps at that time had been started in Germany and others were rapidly being established. These camps stood out as a fine piece of constructive policy, for there depression was stripped from underfed bodies, inertia from wretched souls. The unemployed youth of the nation, between sixteen and twenty-two, who had

lost hope and energy were fed and clothed and trained and drilled into superb specimens of vigorous manhood, who, like young eagles, turned proudly to the sun.

Our first stop, miles from Berlin, was at a camp in process of construction. Under the supervision of trained workmen, the boys were building their future home, a military-looking barrack with an exercise yard beyond which were green fields and pleasant woods. The clang of hammers filled the air, floors were being laid, plumbing was in progress, and, stripped to the waist, brown-skinned, jolly-looking boys were everywhere.

Meanwhile the trainees slept in tents, or lodged with the farmers of the district for whom they worked, alternating agriculture with building operations. Camp life starts at six, with coffee and milk, rye bread and butter and fruit—apples are to be had for the picking. At midday there is a meal of stew with vegetables and a pudding, varied by cheese, sausage or bacon, followed by an hour's break. The actual working day of eight hours ends at four. But manual labour is only part of the routine; gymnasium, drill—especially drill—boxing, swimming and other sports follow, but the long day is rounded off with an hour of recreation. The time table is uniform, the occupation varies with the district. The boys are drilled by an authentic sergeant-major, but I do not think that the camps should be regarded as forcing grounds of militarism. Drill, to the Prussian mind, is essentially desirable—and Prussia is the tutor of Germany. I realised this in talking to a real old Prussian general, complete with moustache and whiskers, like Hindenburg in embryo. He was a short vigorous man, over seventy but upright as a ramrod, and I was told had served with great distinction in the War. He spoke English with a stiff precision, and though I was conscious that he

regarded my methods of life and my general outlook with disfavour, he was extremely courteous, and took considerable pains to explain the national point of view.

"What you English cannot, or will not understand," said he, "is that we Germans like discipline. You do not like it—we thrive on it. It is the desire of our hearts to be able to endure pain and fatigue to their limit. Only by experiencing pain ourselves can we learn how to inflict it on our enemies!"

After which admirable pagan sentiment he lit a cigar.

He was on a tour of inspection round the camps, and his eyes drove like a gimlet through the human and the building material round him. But his manner to the boys was kindly, almost paternal; the youngsters flushed up proudly when he spoke to them.

I asked my little ramrod if he thought there was a chance of a return to German parliamentary government. He literally barked a negative!

"It is a system for soft and easy nations. It does not suit a people of blood and iron."

I tried to get him on the subject of Hitler as the Koenig man, but he was not to be drawn. He could not, or would not, discuss the leader! Metaphorically he lifted his pale grey hat to the heavens at the mention of the name, and not only his arm, but his whole body went taut to the salute. A simple old man, his touching faith in redemption by bodily battery is shared by millions of his fellow countrymen—it is the meeting point of the two generations.

Our next halt was in the middle of farm lands, where the lads lived in a huge barn with rough flooring and partitions. The camp was almost deserted. Every hand was wanted in the harvest fields. The weather-wise had sniffed rain and the

hay must be got in before the storm broke. The trainees, I should explain, are used as voluntary helps by the farmers, who put them to every and any kind of agricultural work.

A skeleton staff was tidying up the house and cooking the dinner, and presently I came across a squad of potato peelers, scraping away for dear life. Now most of the boys whistled at their jobs, but this lot were silent, almost dour, and I wondered why. My compatriot elucidated the mystery. Potato peeling was anathema to masculine flesh and blood, which resented the fiddling task. Properly, these budding Nazis should, they felt, have eaten potatoes in their skins. As it was, they were detailed to this loathly job for a whole week. It was, they confessed, Punishment No. 1, for breach of discipline—being late at meals and answering back. There was, however, a more dreaded penalty. Slovenliness on parade, slackness in obeying orders meant staying in on Wednesday night, when, for two blissful hours, leave was granted and the lads of the camp met the girls of the village and wandered through the woods and out on the hills.

I wondered what my ramrod would have said to potato peeling as an aid to discipline ! It seemed to answer admirably, however ; I found no cowed looks, no frightened eyes among this crowd of youthful bodies. Fear cannot be hidden, it betrays itself in a hundred ways—a greyish pallor underneath the skin, the sudden reddening of the neck, a twitching of the hand, but none of these signs and portents were present in any of the campers. It was good to see these broad-chested, hearty, happy recruits. They gave me a new view of Germany; for them there is no shadow of fear, the future holds no terror or perplexity. The Fatherland is the be all and end all of existence, at once the Altar of Patriotism and its sacred fire.

" But when they have finished their nine months training, what happens ? " I asked.

" Some will be absorbed as farm hands," the Commandant, a jolly red-faced man, replied, " others will marry and settle on the land. . . . The rest will return to the cities."

" To rejoin the unemployed ? " The thought was disquieting.

" For the winter, perhaps. But things will be better next spring when they can come back again. Meanwhile, if they can't get jobs, they will draw the dole and work for the Nazi Party."

Two marks a day is the unemployment rate in Germany. This amount is taken for the boys' upkeep in the camps, less a few pfennigs which they receive on their weekly evening out. I did not like to think of those splendid young giants going home to propaganda in the back streets. To me the Nazi movement was not remarkable for its army or its ardour, but because, as I thought, it had rooted itself in the soil. The roots, alas, seemed to be merely transient.

Hitler undoubtedly aimed at settling the whole 6,000,000 unemployed on the land, to produce, not for profit, but for use. In his scheme every man was to dwell under his own roof-tree and feed his own family on rye bread, fruit and vegetables—with occasional meat. He visualised a wide-eyed, deep-chested race that had shed the bad teeth, bad eyes and spindle shanks of the slum product, and the people reacted to his vision, and looked, but in vain, for any signs of the break up of the big estates. Alas ! for Hitler, vested interest already barred the way to his reforms. The Junkers had supported him in the first place, because they realised he could break the Socialists, but having disposed of this menace to their class, they were not likely to consent placidly to their own extinction.



“SUDDEN TERRIFYING HAIRPIN BENDS”

See page 77

"Hitler is a visionary, with all the failings and the qualities of his type," a German writer said once. "He does not know fear, therefore he does not know prudence. The Junkers class, remember, have seen four-and-twenty leaders of revolt rise—and fall." . . .

We found the next camp at their dinner, in a huge courtyard set with tables and forms. Blue-eyed, fair-haired, muscular, with superb teeth, some of the lads, I was told, had been poor specimens when they arrived, but sun and air and contentment had worked wonders.

The forty members of our party had distributed themselves at the tables, taking snapshots, exchanging autographs, establishing international relations all round. One lady from Vancouver confided to me that she thought the boys ought to wear wool next their skins. She feared the night dews would lie heavy on their bare flesh. Another felt that more individual taste should be allowed in clothes, until she realised that the Brown Shirt uniform was, at the moment, the height of sartorial ambition. For the most part, however, general opinion was enthusiastic, and a ripple of delight ran through the party when the boys began to sing. And how they sang ! Saxons, Bavarians, Brandenburgers, all of them touched with that sense of melody which is their birthright. A semi-gypsy looking type produced a guitar, and the voices suddenly harmonised, flooding the countryside in joyous waves of sound. They sang for an hour—ballads, lyrics, opera choruses, marching songs—with throats of steel and voices of pure gold. They would, I am sure, have been singing still if the Commandant had not given the signal to fall in. . . .

We left them with regret, to drive for miles through stretches of smiling meadow land, by lakes and hills and glinting streams.

The Province of Brandenburg has a landscape quality of beauty, and ranges itself pictorially with a gentle yet dignified appeal, as though it were one vast and very lovely park. The villages were pleasant, the houses in their little gardens well kept—even the swastikas painted in red upon the door took on a gracious aspect and seemed more ornamental and less militant. In a pleasant valley, sheltered by thickly wooded hills, rose a long straggling building, overgrown with creeper and convolvulus. The glint of water in the sun revealed one of those limpid lakes that jewel the province with a rare distinction, and from the adjoining fields came the sound of strong healthy laughter.

This camp was the headquarters of afforestation. Here the lads learnt ancient lore and modern science as to the treatment of trees, how to rear saplings and to fell forest giants. When one contingent was engaged in woodcraft, another was at the neighbouring quarry, hewing fresh chambers in the rock, while yet a third was reclaiming bog land at some miles' distance.

It was a very pleasant place. The long dormitories looked over the lake towards the hillsides. Through the open windows came the scent of hay, honeysuckle and lavender, and bees buzzed among the rose bushes in the garden. Above each bed, neat, narrow and beautifully clean, hung family photographs, with here and there a film star—Marlene Dietrich looked from the wall on every side, with an occasional Greta Garbo. Jars full of wild flowers stood on wooden shelves and a huge branch of wistaria trailed from a jug on the table. Each bed had an individual touch—a coloured blanket, an embroidered pillow—a special portrait of Adolf Hitler.

In this centre a hundred youths shared a community existence. Here, as in every camp,

a number of University students spent their vacations. They worked and ate and slept and played with the rest without any class distinctions, and I am sure learnt in the process more about life than all their lecture rooms could teach them.

By this time all of us were thirsty and some of us hungry. The sausage sandwiches had disappeared and requests for "tea" twittered on the air. Our conductor-in-chief led the way to a pleasant restaurant in the middle of a flowering garden, where we might order and consume what we would. But a very charming and most unexpected hospitality was offered us. Mine host, who was also mayor of the town, insisted we should be the guests of himself and his council, and immediately plates of soup, mounds of veal cutlets, salads and stewed fruit made their appearance. Germany was a poor country at that time, with a diminishing export trade and few visitors, so that the cost of entertainment was by no means inconsiderable. But the little restaurant gave of its utmost and allowed us to overflow the *salon* and stream into the garden, happy and content.

All the harshness and the hate that in Berlin marks out the Nazi gospel was here translated into fellowship, while the Heils that continuously smote the air had a note of welcome rather than challenge.

"The city is always more cruel and more crude than the country," said the Englishman. "Here there are trees and lakes by which man can find shelter and refreshment—the pavement is a stony stepmother. All the same, Berlin under Hitler, to me, stirs with the breath of life. Before he came, the air was dank with discontent, stagnant with despair."

Our conductor toasted Great Britain, Canada and the States in disjointed English, and one of our party responded in German to immense

applause. It was rather like an Oddfellows meeting where every one drinks with his neighbour, makes foolish jokes and swears eternal friendship.

The light had faded from the sky when we got back to Berlin, tired but enthusiastic. I reported dutifully to Fuzzy, who handed me a letter from a charming and cultured woman to whom I had an introduction from Frank Buchman of the Oxford Group. She is not attached to that amazing body, neither am I, but we both like Frank, who is always delightfully ready to do his friends a kindness.

The Countess X—there are reasons why I should not mention her name—belongs to an aristocratic past. She was an attendant at the Kaiser's Court and her husband had held an important diplomatic post. Her knowledge of affairs, her intimacy with former pillars of State, made me eager to hear her opinions on the new order, and with keen anticipation I went round to her flat overlooking the river at its most pleasant city reach.

In the old days she had kept considerable state, but money had left her, and now, surrounded by family portraits, priceless furniture and endless bric-à-brac, she lives in a small suite with a tiny retinue and no car.

The door was opened on the chain and an elderly maid inspected me behind its shelter.

"The chain dates from the Socialist times," explained my hostess later. "We never dared to go to bed unless it was on the door. Every night the Communists raided the neighbourhood, my windows were continually broken and my neighbour was robbed of her silver and her jewels. The hotels used to put up their shutters at sunset, and everyone had to scuttle home if they wanted to be safe. You see, the Socialist Government was not

strong enough or courageous enough to put down the Communists—or, perhaps, they felt it would be disloyal. Anyway, during the winter months—less than two years ago—there was a reign of terror in Berlin with every nightfall.”

“ I don’t say they were all Communists,” she went on quietly. “ Probably many were just hungry desperate people who could not endure their wretched existence any longer. But whoever they were, not a night passed without fights, and smashing of windows and wrecking of shops and hotels. . . . You see,” she added, “ how deep an impression that period has left on us Berliners. People can hardly believe they can go to sleep in peace. . . . You have seen no disturbances since you came here ? ”

The city, I agreed, had been almost monotonously respectable.

“ That is one of the chief things Hitler has done. He has restored order.”

A woman of the same social caste as the Countess insisted, on the other hand, that the street riotings and lootings were the outcome of factional fights between the Nazis and the Socialists in which the Communist element freely joined. The fact, however, did not seem to be disputed that the Government had been unable to keep order, either among its supporters or opponents. It was, however, beyond question that the general order of the city by whatsoever means was now maintained.

My friend discussed Hitler with the frankness and the insight of an independent mind. He suffered quite obviously, she felt, from lack of education. He had no historic sense, and, therefore, often blundered. “ But, after all,” she said, “ I don’t think that culture is the way of salvation. Whatever Hitler lacks, he has faith.”

Always, I found this emphasis on faith, as though belief in itself was an effective method of social

reconstruction. Nobody seemed to ask on what their own, or Hitler's, faith rested. Hitler worship among the populace indeed resembled the form of prayer practised by the early Christian scientists who, it may be remembered, used to encircle their foundress, the future Mrs. Eddy, with the reiterated chant of "Mrs. Glover, how we love her," and leave material results to Providence.

Enquiring minds in Nazi Germany, we know, are liable to be suppressed, but even in confidential conversation nobody seems to locate those economic foundations on which their aspirations should rest.

The Countess spoke English like a second language; it was used, she explained, very much at the Kaiser's Court where, I gather, she was *persona grata*. Still the centre of a social circle that includes most of the best-known names of Berlin, Hitler numbers some of his staunchest adherents in her set.

"Many of us have lost our money and our estates and are of little material help. But we can encourage him. . . ."

She looked whimsically at her Dresden tea service.

"You know, my dear, the economy that most distresses me is that I cannot have fresh linen for the table every day—the laundries charge such terribly high prices that, as you see, I have to fall back on paper napkins. But indeed at one time things were worse. . . . I had little use for any napkins during the War. . . . I almost forgot the taste of real food."

She told me of the abject hopelessness and spiritual disintegration that had fallen on her country during the last years, apathetic acquiescence varied by despairing upheavals.

"There has been imprisonment without trial under Hitler, secret unrest and many shootings.

But even so, the national *morale* is healthier and more virile. . . . Some break eggs to make omelettes, others may smash them to no purpose. Hitler has purpose in his violence. But above all—and this is why he has the allegiance of every true German, however much we may differ upon points—he asks nothing for himself ; in no way is he self-seeking. It is the Fatherland that counts.”

The Countess—a typical aristocrat of the Hohenzollern regime—very simply and most sincerely pinned her belief to Hitler. She and hundreds of her caste believed that, in spite of his sudden gusts of ungoverned speech and unbalanced fury, he would restore to Germany her international prestige and bring back internal prosperity. And if that happened, they asked, what did it matter if a few thousand lives were wiped out ?

At both ends of the social scale I found this tremendous faith. Literary and artistic folk, with journalists, are not so happy. The complete suppression of any individual point of view, the prohibition of all plays and books or articles that do not voice the National Socialist gospel suffocates the imagination. The literary *auto da fé* includes Toller's masterpieces, certain of Hauptmann's dramas and the works of Freud, the latter on the ground that the theory of will inhibitions impairs the impulse to fight and engenders a cowardly passivity. None of the above can be bought and should not be asked for !

It is notable, and to me one of the most salient criticisms of the Nazi regime, that since the installation of this form of Fascism not one creative work of literary merit has appeared. Neither in fiction, poetry, or the drama has the national renaissance been translated. A dead level of mediocrity has been sustained, and in no department of literature can we find any trace of outstanding force or eloquence. The complete

submersion of ideas, beliefs, alien to Hitler worship has produced a harvest barren even of technique.

"Character," said the Countess, "is the really important thing. If we have a strong people, we shall have a great Art and sound economics !"

It was, I suppose, the irritation at this touching but intangible theory that made the business men of Berlin with whom I came in contact, the least enthusiastic of the Hitler brigade. They praised the Führer and acclaimed his greatness. But on his financial policy they were very quiet. One of the most astute remarked that now the Communist menace had been destroyed trade would go back to its accustomed channels.

"All this talk of the small man is useless. We are past the day of commercial individualism. The big combine has come to stay."

The feeling, I gathered, was that while as a national pick-me-up Hitler is unrivalled, as an economist he is considered negligible, and in that connection may finally be defeated—if not suppressed !

Would that, I wondered, be the ultimate fate of this flaming figure who—without patronage or prestige—of his own fervour had blazed a way from obscurity to a pinnacle of power ? Would he be defeated by the very thing he had sworn to strangle—the octopus of finance ? . . .

That afternoon I saw Hitler for the first time. In one of his unexpected sallies he had flown from Bavaria to Berlin, and all unheralded was on his way to the Chancellory. He sat in an open car, bare-headed and with the sun full on his face. The eyes were aglint with an actual glow of fervour. He stared before him as in a vision—impervious, I felt, to heat as to cold, to hunger or to suffering. I knew him for an ecstatic without pity and without fear. Indifferent himself to pain he is equally indifferent to its infliction. Not to be tempted by

wealth, women or any of the lures of the flesh—like all ecstasies he is subject to fits of emotional darkness and doubt, with sudden startling resurgences.

A genius of revivalism who has called an entire nation to a world crusade he is at his best against big odds. I wondered then, in 1933, if and when the Junkers should acclaim him as their chief he would carry his lance as fearlessly as when he was the people's paladin? Entrenched wealth and influence fall back before direct attack. Immobilised by Hitler at the onset of his career, might they not reform and by sheer weight of a costly obeisance break him?

All this was in 1933. Germany a year later had answered some of my questions.

CHAPTER IV

“What is left but Hell for company?”

THE history of modern Germany has no more significant chapters than the record of events during 1934. The midsummer blood-letting, when an amazed world learnt that Hitler had shot Roehm, the beloved: the incredible assassination of General Schleicher, followed by the Führer's inauguration as President, were the preliminaries to a period of depressed confusion. Dr. Goebbels' broadcast as to Hitler's heroism worked up Nazi fervour to a point of ecstasy; but, at the same time, there was an obvious declension of national optimism. The people still believed in the Leader's programme, but were definitely conscious that the sun of National Socialism had passed the meridian. By September, 1934, I felt the people's spiritual ecstasy had cooled and that a dumb, almost a tragic acquiescence, had replaced the fiery on-rushing stream of acclamation.

Trade was bad; the steady decline of export figures told its own tale. Unemployment had increased. Government statistics proved that fewer people were drawing the dole. But the figures did not show any increase in productive labour, but merely indicated a higher percentage of occupational activity—hedging, ditching, road-making, and other seasonal jobs, with the hardy perennial of Nazi propaganda. But, more eloquent than external evidence of economic failure and depression was the change in the national

psychology. Hitler adoration still persisted, but, I felt, with a difference. As President of the Reich, he was less immediately potent than as Chancellor. No longer a modern Parsifal with a magic sword, he had become an Olympian remote, almost impassive, the mouthpiece of finance and the aristocracy, controlled by the Fascism he had evoked.

It is always from the common man one gets the clearest indication of public opinion, and, as before, I found my friend Fuzzy, the hall porter, a social barometer.

"How are things?" I asked.

"They would be better if we had not so many enemies"—Fuzzy's eyes looked hurt. "Why do England and the rest hate us so?"

I assured him that it was only the Government system and not the German people that Europe resented, but the old man would not allow any division. *Vox populi—vox dei*—Hitler still spoke for the nation. The Leader and his flock were one and indivisible. But even Hitler, he said mournfully, could not suppress enemy machinations. The national hunger for small holdings would long ago have been satisfied but for the intrigues of Jewish finance. Fuzzy insisted, and I think believed, that the non-Aryans had a stranglehold on the Junkers, thus preventing the cutting up of the big estates. I heard this fairy tale in many quarters, and, perpetually reiterated, the broadcast has had its effect. The Germans respond automatically to the Coue system, and mass suggestion, like flood lighting, seems all pervasive. Fuzzy admitted that business was not good—Germany's enemies would not give her credit—but indeed, in face of the almost complete stagnation of hotel life, it was difficult to deny that times were bad. There were not wanting other signs of economic failure. I had no longer to complain

of excessive portions of veal, giant chicken and vast salmon. The food was as good as ever, but the helpings were considerably depleted. The price of commodities had gone up in the shops and in the markets. Clothing was also more expensive, and cotton goods seemed to have disappeared. Substitutes, however, were already on sale, and synthetic materials flooded the stores. They looked quite attractive but were not warranted to wear.

"They will not stand the rain," a depressed housewife explained to me, "and they come to pieces in the wash."

In the little eating-houses, prices had risen from ten to fifteen per cent, and the increase of cost seemed to synchronise with the decrease of conversation. No longer would the genial workmen of my former acquaintance discuss topical affairs in the little restaurants underneath the railway arches. Hope seemed to have gone out of them, and only faith, tattered but inviolate, remained. They could not look forward; they did not want to look back. I felt that if once their worship faltered, they would relax into the spiritual defeatism from which the Leader had reclaimed them.

But if the older men were spiritless, I found an even more significant trend in the younger generation. The Brown Shirts still dashed about with their familiar clatterings and conducted domiciliary searches with the same gusto. The Black Shirts maintained their faultless discipline. But under the seeming similarity to what had been, there was a startling difference. The flame of sacrifice had quite obviously dimmed. A year ago tobacco and beer were forsworn by the Nazis, all their spare pfennigs going to the Party funds. To-day S.A. and S.S. men foregather in the cafés smoking cigarettes and drinking lager, as a matter of course.

The note of self-denial has dulled, in some cases to extinction.

The same thing has happened to the civilian population. To forgo a substantial Sunday dinner for a cheap snack and give the money saved to the State fund for the poor used to bring a sacramental thrill. Now the sacrifice has lost its savour ; no one glories in the enforced abstinence, and few believe in its permanent value in the cause of National Socialism—it is merely the substitution of enforced for voluntary charity.

The gospel which Hitler had preached—for which, in the first beginnings of the Nazi regime he had stood—all for each and each for all, was disintegrating. The old limitations of class interest and caste segregation were coming back with increased rigour. The most striking indication of this was a re-emergence of the old militarism into civil life.

In the first flush of the Brown Shirt era I had discovered no trace of militarism among the rank and file. Martial swagger in the Nazi mass petered out in the unit. Their pride in army manœuvres was temperamental, an inherent love of discipline. This, however, has altered fundamentally ; a Storm Trooper regards himself as a part of the Reichswehr, which in the near future may be sent to serve on an enemy front. He no longer visualises a return to civilian life, with an established job and good prospects, but regards himself as permanently attached to the fighting forces. A little while ago the S.A. men were the banner bearers of a proud populace. That phase has gone, and the old arrogance of the Prussian soldier towards a non-combatant has taken its place. I repeatedly saw peaceful citizens elbowed aside by Nazi troopers without the least apology. The man in the street is forced to give way to the uniform.

There seems no general feeling of resistance to this offensive attitude; in Berlin, at any rate, military precedence is accepted without question. The superiority of the mailed fist is tacitly acknowledged. The psychology of frightfulness has returned.

The centre of the Prussian hegemony, Berlin regards with the same passivity the struggle between Church and State—God and the Führer—which still goes on. The religious fervour of Bavaria which has put up such a good fight that it looks like winning, leaves the capital untouched. Such feeling as I encountered was directed against those orthodox Lutherans who regard the Almighty rather than the Chancellor as the fount of inspiration on the ground that internecine disaffection among the hierarchy suggests divided loyalty to the Leader. Many devout church-goers seem to favour the fusing of the Hitler symbol with that of the Christian God—a conglomeration of Swastika and Cross would seem to them as reverent as it was desirable. After all, in the popular idea, Hitler, like the Man of Sorrows, has known affliction and is acquainted with grief. In despairing fidelity millions still put their trust in the Austrian Corporal, and while his image has grown more remote the recession has enhanced its potency. It is as though German consciousness had centred in a blind and despairing refusal to admit the possibility of human failure in their idol. Like the devotees who concentrate on Buddha's navel, the Hitlerites adhere unswervingly to their ideal—if a slanting thought should come between, the external world might gain admission !

This dry rot, whose existence no one will admit, has infected the more admirable achievements of the Nazi regime. It was a keen disappointment to discover that the Labour Camps—the centre of

Nazi aspiration for the Hitler Jugend—had lost their first enthusiasm. I went to many of the camps that I had visited before, and the results hurt me. The order and the method were unchanged. It was the spiritual atmosphere that had deadened. I recognised a number of youths, but in the matter of twelve months, they seem to have lost the vitality, fervour, and resilient belief that had quickened body and soul so miraculously. Alas! they had realised the sickness of hope deferred. . . . They had returned to the cities from their training physically fit, mentally confident, assured that the following spring would see them permanently settled on the land under their family roof-trees. But a year had passed, and they found themselves as far as ever from even the smallest holding, and in the bitterness of disappointment discovered that though camp life brings health, and companionship, it has no sequel of security.

“When I leave I shall join the Storm Troopers if they will have me,” a splendid-looking boy of nineteen explained. “If not, I shall work for the Party through the winter and come back here in the spring, I hope.”

There is less chance than ever of permanent farm work for the trainees. The agricultural outlook is gloomy. The drought, according to expert estimates, reduced the crops to 75 per cent of the average harvest, and as the Government will not allow the peasants to raise the price proportionately, rural discontent is general. The spring will speed up the demand for seasonal labour, which will increase by the autumn months. But with the coming of winter this year, next year, any year, the demand will slacken and gradually cease, and the army of camp labourers will return to the dole.

The general attitude to foreigners has grown

less cordial. I have never found a lack of kindness among the people, it is the official mind that seems to have stiffened. Parties of tourists are still welcome, but individual visitors, especially journalists, seem to be regarded with a suspicion that formerly did not exist or, at any rate, remained unshown. New and irritating regulations are continually sprung on the traveller. I crossed into Germany from Russia via Poland, and at the frontier met an unexpected and most unpleasant form of Nazi interrogation. At previous visits my luggage had been courteously and cursorily examined. But on this occasion all my possessions were ransacked, and though it was in the middle of the night and I was dopy with sleep, I was put through a searching examination as to my political opinions and economic faith. It was not as though I carried any external evidence of anti-capitalist convictions. I had taken the precaution to shed any literature that might have been considered even controversial. It is always foolish to run counter to the import restrictions of a country, more especially as books and pamphlets go as a rule quite safely through the post. But I might have bristled with the reddest of red propaganda for all the consideration I received. I did not argue or reproach. In these circumstances I always find it wise to appear slightly imbecillic, and by the help of a steadfast stupidity which I kept up, it seemed to me for hours, I was finally allowed to go on my way.

My inquisitor was a young and harried looking official, who, I felt sure, did not, in the least, like his job. "They have to do it you know," a kindly German of the commercial class explained to me. "It's part of the discipline. . . ." He sighed regretfully and looked pained.

Currency regulations alter almost from hour to hour. On leaving Germany, I learnt that it was



"LIKE A GRENADIER'S BUSBY"

forbidden to take notes out of the country, even for the most trifling amount, and that they must be changed into coin. I got off comparatively lightly, but one unfortunate woman had to stagger away with 500 marks' worth of metal.

While, however, the Prussian mailed fist makes itself felt more and more in home affairs, external evidences of suppression are less obvious. Even before the Saar Plebiscite, which was followed by peace speeches to the world at large, Hitler was handing olive branches to international feeling. He stated, quite truly, that many Concentration Camps have been closed down. It will be remembered that at the time of the Presidential Election, it was broadcast by Goebbels that 90 per cent of the prisoners in these places voted for Hitler ; presumably, therefore, the reason for their existence has now ceased. But though there are still camps in the swamps of East Prussia, breeding grounds of fever and ague, in the majority of instances these centres have disappeared. It does not mean, however, that the inmates have been liberated. The foreign press is not informed of what has happened to them, and only the inquisitive know that the majority have been transferred to prisons, where very many of them die. Their friends and relatives, however, are not informed of what has occurred. The fate of thousands still remains obscure.

The general apathy to the treatment of political prisoners, the majority of which have never been given a trial, seems amazing, until one remembers that apparent curiosity on such a point might mean the disappearance of the inquisitive. The authority of the local Nazi groups is still unchallenged. The only difference is that their personnel has been changed, and in place of the fanatically cruel but genuinely convinced Nazi, Prussian officialdom has been installed. This was one of the results of the

Purge, which not only put to death hundreds of Brown Shirts, but definitely displaced the leaders of National Socialism, who really desired to break up the vast territories of the Junker class, and to control the profits of the big industrialists.

This suppression of the original Hitler converts has opened the way for a small but intensive anti-Nazi propaganda. In spite of domiciliary combings and extensive espionage, little coteries are trying to map out a means of overthrowing the system which they regard as a negation of liberty. They change their headquarters continually, print their communications secretly, and by these means manage to maintain an underground communication with their associates throughout the country. The political basis of these groups is Collectivism, but many of the members were originally Liberals and Democratic Socialists, who, under the pressure of events, have accepted Socialist economics. But though subjectively they keep alive the spirit of freedom, from an objective point of view, these various sections are quite powerless. Neither they, nor the genuine National Socialists, have any influence.

As original leader of the Nazis, Hitler was undoubtedly influenced by his fellows. But he has passed beyond their ken, and is inhibited and controlled by the forces that in the beginning he sincerely sought to overthrow, but which, in the ultimate, took away his power with a Presidential crown. The nominal head of an army, solid for National Socialism, he is, in effect, the vassal of the ruling caste. His good intentions are spilled like water; he could not give them economic shape.

Since the Saar victory—as it is acclaimed—Prussian domination has strengthened at home, while peace propaganda has increased abroad. On the one hand, it is said that the Saarlanders

voted, not for the Reich, but for Hitler ; on the other, we are assured that a National, rather than a Nazi policy in foreign affairs will be carried out. It seems to be the general opinion of competent observers that the people of the Saar voted primarily and fundamentally for the country of their origin, rather than for Adolf Hitler. Denationalisation is a peculiarly devastating affair, and it may well be that the voters remembered that, while the present regime may pass away, the Fatherland will probably remain in being while the world lasts.

But for all the shouting and the propaganda, the economic position of Germany has not improved, and with the intensification of Prussianism, there seems small hope of any lessening of social oppression. Prussia holds the reins of the three Dictatorships—military, economic and political. The Junkers command the Army ; the industrialists, bankers, etc., hold economic power ; while the Nazi rank and file are swayed by the Chancellor, who, in his turn, is controlled by the other two. Thus, in an amazingly short time, the wheel has swung full circle. The exploitation of the peasant, the worker and the intelligensia, which the Socialists tried to alter, and Hitler swore he would end, has come back in renewed intensity ; the German people to-day are returning to the condition of serfdom, broken for ever, it was thought, by the War.

There is no prospect of uprooting Fascism in Germany. It can only be dethroned by military defeat, and though territorial expansion is admittedly part of the Nazi programme, it is not within the sphere of practical politics at the moment. Prussian ambition does not seem to tend towards a conquest of France, but turns eastward to the Baltic countries, Esthonia and Latvia. The signal for such advance will probably be the embroilment

of Soviet Russia with Japan. A Japanese move on Vladivostok might occasion a German thrust to the east, while Poland, on her part, would march, or try to march, into the Ukraine, the *ultima thule* of Pilsudski's Imperialist designs. A pact between Poland and Germany has been concluded against Russia, in which each country allows the other a free hand in the two designated spheres, if, and when, the Soviets be attacked.

The hostility of the proprietorial British Press towards Soviet Russia has blinded them to the dangers of Japanese designs on the U.S.S.R. Once the issue is joined, the whole of Europe may blaze. France, committed to support Russia should she be attacked by two powers, will go for Germany, the Little Entente will be hopelessly embroiled, and Armageddon will be precipitated.

In the ultimate, Collectivism must prove the spiritual foe of Fascism, and Germany is conscious, to the point of hysteria, of where her danger lies. But, indeed, the economic and political forces of the whole world seem converging to the same point. America, desperately averting revolution by a system of doles and bribes, the bread and circuses of Ancient Rome, has only postponed the inevitable clash. In our own country, by slower and more gentle degrees, the same struggle is approaching. The capitalist universe is sick, and though Fascism may, for a time, stave off decease, ultimately dissolution must come.

Meanwhile, as in Italy, Fascism in Germany has produced an intellectual slump. There is but one standard—that of the Fascists. It will be recalled that while Mussolini has achieved marvels of reconstruction, turning desert wildernesses into pleasant lands, no artist of imaginative distinction has appeared under his rule. It is the same case under Hitler. The creative impulse

cannot flourish in a society regimented to the smallest detail.

The theatre and the film have sunk into a complete rut. The repetition of the Nazi gospel on the talkies and upon the stage makes amusement a pain. Dr. Goebbels has lost any pretensions to originality. He neither shortens his angle nor sharpens his views, and his broadcasts determine the standard of cinema story or stage plot.

The position of women, both economically and socially, has recently crystallized into acknowledged inferiority. Wives are the vassals of their husbands—in theory if not in practice—and the unmarried must either take menial and ill-paid jobs, or drag out existence on the dole. Even this, however, is subject to political investigation, and any woman suspect of anti-Nazi tendencies, however secret, had better starve than claim her unemployment pay. Short rations and increasingly bad trade exacerbate masculine as well as feminine nerves, and though the summer months will bring relief, there are still some sharp times to be endured.

“The German point of desperation is much lower than the British or the American,” a citizen of the United States, with thirty years’ experience of the country, said to me. “The people will tighten their belts and carry on, sober and uncomplaining, with far less than our people would. Whatever happens, I don’t think they’ll kick, the fight has gone out of them. It was Bismarck, the Prussian, wasn’t it, who called the Germans ‘sheep’? Well, the Junkers seem to have beaten them into mutton-like docility once again.”

But side by side with that mute obedience flames a fanatical arrogance.

“The whole world is against us,” said a young Brown Shirt, with pride. “We shall bring our enemies to their knees.”

That is the crux of the Nazi gospel. So far has Hitler fallen from his high estate that, unable to solve unemployment or efficiently distribute wealth, he can only stimulate the national nerves by hope of conquest ! What remains ?

CHAPTER V

“ In the mornings seek the mountains ”

THE train drew up at the neat little station with its white paint. A box outside the window of the station-master's office was gay with flowers and the landscape, rounded off by a glimpse of the lake in the distance, included slender pleasantly green trees. The people on the platform were laughing and chatting, free and unconcerned. A band in comic opera uniforms surrounded a burly figure in a plumed hat—the Burgomaster someone said—and there wasn't a sign of a brown shirt or a swastika anywhere ; and though everybody was speaking German, no one said “ Heil ! ”

After the tension and formality of Nazi Germany, it all seemed unreal, and it was only gradually I realised that we were over the Austrian frontier and had arrived at Bregenz in the Province of Vorarlberg.

We scrambled out of the carriage—blinking a little in the sunshine. The Burgomaster swept off his hat in greeting, we shook hands and the band began to play. We were surrounded by a cheering and exultant crowd. A group of exquisite young creatures—peasant girls from the mountains in their national dress—made their way towards us. They were an amazing sight ; in full black petticoats with embroidered blouses, scarfs and aprons, the costume was capped by a marvellous head-dress, straight from the sixteenth century, a great aureole of gold lace, miraculously softened,

that framed the face like a saint's in a stained-glass window. The girls carried bouquets of Alpine roses, which, with a pretty little curtsy, they bestowed on us—three men and one woman journalist !

The crowds swelled and figures in morning coats appeared with bunches of ripe grapes, which they handed to us most politely,—editors, I was told, of the local journals who had assembled to welcome the advance guard of a newspaper army.

A train arrived at another platform, a throng of pressmen with a sprinkling of women poured out and swarmed across the line. The band played louder ; the exquisite creatures distributed Alpine roses all round, the editors produced more grapes.

And then the Burgomaster spoke !

It was, I felt, a great speech, telling us all of the beauties and the wonders of his native land, smitten so sorely by the depression that few and fewer visitors were able to enjoy it.

When he had finished the band marched out of the station, down the main street towards the principal hotel, and we all followed, mixed up with editors and lovely girls, grapes and Alpine roses.

It was incredibly delightful and typically Austrian, and I wished that the same kind of thing could be arranged in London on the arrival of foreign journalists. I pictured the *Times* bearing bananas ; the *Telegraph* carrying pears, while the *Daily Herald* desperately offered apples.

Alas, we no longer have these customs in England, only in Austria do fairy tales come true.

There were fifty of us, Czech, Hungarian, Belgian, French, Italian, Polish, Jugo-Slavian, Swiss, Dutch, Rumanian, Greek and Turkish, of all ages and experience, from Father Christmas, an aged but alert old gentleman with a long white beard, a director from a central European syndicate, to a small boy paragraphist, with an incredibly mobile face and a mouth that slipped whenever he

wasn't looking. We were in fact the European press in microcosm and we had come to spy out Austria from a landscape and a political point of view, without fear or favour.

Preceded by the band, we trailed through the pleasant little town. We British, led by a Scots journalist whose words of wisdom occupy the attention of millions of breakfast tables every morning—I called him the Chieftain—kept abreast of the Czechs though outdistanced by the Swiss, who leapt like goats, and the long-limbed Hungarians. Our other colleagues included a correspondent from Berlin and a young man touched with Celtic melancholy who, very good-looking, was piled up with roses from the girls—though I noticed he was not unduly loaded with local fruit; with a head like the picture of St. Sebastian, and the loping walk of a panther, "Sepsa" seemed to me to express him.

At the hotel we were given a reception; the management bowed before us, the editors acclaimed us and we were told that food would be ready in twenty minutes! After which we had a hasty wash and brush up, only to find that lunch did not appear for another hour.

Charming, artistic, hospitable, beautifully mannered, the Austrians are incredibly devoid of any sense of time, and there are moments when their organising capacity suddenly and hopelessly breaks down. Any hiatus in our programme, however, was always met by such delightful *bonhomie* that it was immediately excused. Unpunctuality never worries me—I have too little sense of time myself to feel reproachful. What, however, I did find a touch annoying was the persistence with which the official host in charge of our party laid down his programme: we were awakened from peaceful sleep at unearthly hours, chivvied to our morning coffee and assembled at the starting point only to

find that the motor coaches were not even in sight !

The lunch when it arrived—salmon mayonnaise, chicken, veal and ice cream—justified its delay. Austrian cookery, lighter and more varied than the German variety, is uniformly excellent, though we got a little tired of veal ! Light wines of the Hock variety, with a pleasant lager, are general, and the price is very cheap and the quality good. I always think food and cookery are most important guides to national life—mounds of meat generally indicate heavy conversation !

After lunch we went in a large and comfortable steamer on the lake. It washes the shores of three countries—Austria, Switzerland and Germany, but the problem of passports has been amicably settled. Each nation rows, steams, sails or bathes all over the waters impartially. Landing facilities, however, are only granted to the holder of a *visa*, unless circumstances enforce an unpremeditated call, when the alien visitor is given unofficial hospitality, thus avoiding international difficulties and dangers !

On the boat I learnt something of Austrian internal resources. Like most people I had realised that the poor little country had been very hardly treated at the Peace, where she lost all her foreign possessions ; but Versailles did not stop there. President Wilson and Lloyd George snipped off portions of Austria proper, giving Italy the Dolomites, a region inhabited by national speaking Germans, and other bits and scraps to Czecho-Slovakia, etc., until to-day the unhappy country is left with only a strip of mountain scenery, forests and lakes and the huge city of Vienna.

“Austria has a child’s body with a giant’s head,” a Professor of Economics said to me. “Of our population of six and a half millions, over two millions are centred in the capital. We

have had to reconstruct most of the industries that flourished under the Emperor, and found new ones. Our glass factories centred in Carlsbad have restarted in a small way near Vienna, we are building up a motor engine export trade, and leather we still have. But these and other manufactures are still too small materially to increase our exports or to absorb our city unemployed, and meanwhile our provinces cannot produce sufficient to feed us."

This point was debated generally. A Swiss correspondent held that Austria should be able under expert cultivation to feed and clothe her people from her own resources as did Switzerland.

"But you have enormous engineering works near Zurich," said the Professor, "and for years after our tourist trade slumped yours continued to boom."

"Then there's Holland," urged a Dutch journalist, "we can feed ourselves."

"You forget your colonies," was the answer. "You still make an enormous income from colonial cheap labour. Austria has very little but her scenery."

"Then," we all felt the importance of the issue—"then how are you going to exist?"

The Professor paused. "Some of us still believe in the League of Nations," he said quietly, "and hope for a rectification of the frontiers, which will mean an increased trade. Apart from that I can only see a gradual declension in our standard of life which is bound to have far-reaching and deplorable results. I admit that we could raise enough food to sustain life in our bodies, but it would mean a diet largely of bread and vegetables with very little meat or butter. Such a regimen is hopelessly below the level of our cultural life, and our political consciousness; it is possible for a primitive people newly released

from feudalism like the Russians, but we have been the centre of European civilisation for centuries."

"And yet," said the Dutchman thoughtfully, "what else can you do? It is impossible for Austria to continue to expect foreign loans."

"The depression may lift," said the Professor. "Foreigners may once more have money to spend with us." He had, I felt, another solution, but I did not press for it. Later I realised the idea that animates the majority of the people on which is built their hope of reconstruction.

Certainly there could be no more attractive way of spending money than on the mixture of lakes, mountains, delightful villages and modern hotels, with ski-ing, skating, boating, swimming and shooting which Austria provides at a price far less than the Swiss or even Bavarian tariff.

The mountain girls, with their respective swains, gave us an exhibition of dancing that evening, the men decked in embroidered jackets, white breeches and buckle shoes. Slow, stately, with innumerable hand-clappings and yodellings, the pace gradually speeded up until like an Irish jig it reached the climax.

These dances and the costumes are not decorative accessories for the tourist. They are part of local life throughout Austria. Each district has its special dress, which is worn every Sunday and on fête days. Like the songs and dances and shooting competitions they have been handed down through generations. Rooted in the middle ages they emerge unchanged to-day.

But though old customs continue, modern economics tread on their heels. Bregenz, beautifully traditional, has a large percentage of unemployed. Her factories—cotton and basket weaving—are on half-time; her industries are losing ground.

Fishing is plentiful, however, and somehow the population continue to look cheerful and keep alive.

The mountain roads link up the middle ages with the immediate moment. Triumphs of engineering skill, our huge motor coaches travelled for miles over well-kept thoroughfares, sudden terrifying hair-pin bends and sheerly precipitous drops. The Austrian motor driver has no nerves, takes every possible risk and rarely has an accident.

We passed snow-clad mountains that had looked down on the armies of the Holy Roman Empire, their piercing whiteness slashed by glowing gentians of sapphire blue. Always the past and present were inextricably mingled. At the village of Egg we met the congregation pouring out of the Catholic Church. The women wore full black skirts of a strong material like ciré satin with corselets to match. Embroidered blouses, stout boots and a cone shaped hat of fuzzy black wool like a Grenadier's busby finished the costumes, which had originated hundreds and hundreds of years ago. The girls wore a similar design in white. Their clothes appeared terribly heavy under the fierce sun, but they all looked exquisitely cool and unhurried.

Through the windows of the inn close to the church door came the familiar wireless, the ringing of a telephone bell caught my ear, and in the hotel, where *imbis* awaited us, all the bedrooms had bathrooms attached.

Imbis, I should explain, was eaten any time between breakfast and noon. Stew or sausage,—fish or soup, beer or wine, sandwiches or cheese, *imbis* was always good. We consumed it in all kind of places and surroundings, on a terrace, fronting a vast glacier, whose impenetrable cold seemed to go back to the ice age ; at a little rest hut on a green hillside, in a pleasant courtyard or

conventional coffee room. We grew very friendly over *imbis*, the various nationalities came unstuck as it were and we all adventured on each other's languages.

The British were parked with the Czechs, with a sprinkling of Swiss and Jugo-Slavs thrown in. The contingent was looked after by a distressed young Austrian with pale blue eyes, straw-coloured hair and a wistful expression. Kind, futile, he was a little like a fowl in his clucking anxiety, and we christened him "Henny." He had not had a job for eighteen months, but his shabby suit was always carefully brushed and pressed and he carried a small clothes brush in his pocket. No one ever knew how or why he had been made bear leader, but though he played havoc with the King's English, his disposition was most amiable and we grew quite fond of him. He was painfully unremitting in his attempts to describe the beauties of the scenery, and as we approached a domestic landmark—he wasn't so keen on historic things—he would stand swaying in the coach and point it out. Imagination, however, was not his strong point. "Look," he would say, bursting with national pride, "there is a so-called bridge, and soon, a so-called train will pass—*our* train."

We used to cheer him whenever he stood up and applaud vociferously at the sight of a so-called cow or chicken! Indeed, cows, chickens and even chamois in the Austrian mountains are quite remarkable. They have become inured to modern roads and motor-cars and comfortably moon along the highways all unperturbed, so that we frequently had to wait their pleasure and stand still till they decided to move on.

It was at Feldkirch, still in the Province of Vorarlberg, that we met with one of the pleasantest survivals of ancient times. In a wonderful old

inn with great courtyards and a prodigious fountain, the Burgomaster and the inevitable band awaited us, and by the great man's side stood a portly figure of unusual girth. White-shirted, with a velvet cap on his head, a leather apron encircled his vast waist, and from his stout belt hung a huge bunch of keys and a silver candlestick. He was the Keller Meister—in charge of the vast cellars filled to overflowing with the most delicate wines. His fathers before him, stretching in a long line back to the dark past, had worn the Keller Meister dress and carried the keys and the candle which lit the way through the dim and odorous depths beneath.

From a great flagon of ruby red Burgundy he filled a loving cup that was handed round and duly sipped by fifty journalistic mouths. And then the Chieftain burst into a pæan of praise which so electrified the Burgomaster that he called for the local photographer, and, the Chieftain and the Keller Meister duly snapped, he led the way to a large cool room with huge oak beams and white-washed walls, where we sat down to a Gargantuan *imbis* and long drinks.

But Feldkirch, like the rest of Austria, is hard hit. The country's chief industry at one time was the tourist trade. After the War, when money was still plentiful and business to the uninitiated appeared booming, people from all over Europe trekked to the mountains and the lakes. So large was the influx that the existing hotels could not cope with the situation, visitors overflowed into peasant cottages and there was not a bed to be had for love or money. Prosperity flooded the mountains and the valleys and syndicates were formed to build larger and better and more expensive hotels and mammoth restaurants, and vast staffs of managers, waiters and the rest were engaged.

And then came the slump. The tourist spate dwindled to a thin stream, the hotels grew gaunt and empty, the staffs starved and the peasants, where they had made shillings on the sale of their produce, could not gather up a penny.

The full extent of the desolation, however, the desperate hope of the people that the tourist trade may return, was not made plain till we reached the Tirol.

We spent a long and glorious day on the road, climbing up to a pine-clad height, under a hard blue sky aflame with heat, descending to valleys green and shady, murmurous with streams. We had *imbis*—high *imbis* as Sepa called it—at an hotel near St. Anton. It was so beautiful—the view I mean—that some of us could not eat ! We made up for it, however, at the next meal, about half-past two, after which we progressed by easy stages to Ehrwald. One of the loveliest spots in the Tirol, it lies at the foot of Zugspitze, a bleak mountain of ice-blue, some 10,000 feet high. To reach this memorable spot we had to take the aerial railway. A cabin drawn up by a cable reaches the top in about fifteen minutes, where at the proper season of the year you may contrast the midwinter you have come into with the midsummer you have left below.

I did not enjoy the contrast however. I did not indeed enjoy anything at all. It was at Zugspitze that I made a humiliating discovery. About 8000 feet up I found I could not breathe, and by the time I'd finished the ascent I was panting like a gold fish out of its bowl. There was not enough oxygen in the air for my peculiar requirements—so at least I was told—and blue in the face, all I could do was to swallow brandy and sit collapsed. But even in that abased condition, I was conscious of the unearthly beauty of the scene. The snow gleamed pearly pink, with deep green



"SLENDER CHURCHES RAISED EXQUISITE SPIRES"

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shadows, and over the glacier towering still higher overhead, small children walked in splendour with skis and alpenstocks. I stayed until human endurance gave out and, still panting, crawled back to the cage and descended, sad in the knowledge that mountaineering as a form of adventure was henceforth denied to me.

The hotel was deserted when I arrived ; the rest of the party were on Zugspitze and other visitors there were none.

" You're the first we have had this season," said an old waiter confidentially, " and last Christmas was as bad. We used to be crowded out summer and winter—now the place is like a tomb." He paused and cautiously looked round. No one was in sight, however, and nervously dusting away non-existent crumbs, he continued :

" We've had no Americans and hardly any English for two or three years. That's not the worst—we've lost the Germans. They used to troop into the mountains by the thousand. We were filled to overflowing and had to get extra beds in the village. You see, they felt happy here—with the same language, better cooking, good wine and beer, lovely walks, sport and all they wanted, ever so much cheaper than at home."

" Do none of them come now ? " I asked.

" They can't. Hitler's closed the frontier. It means paying 2000 marks to get permission to cross. . . . It's a terrible thing." He looked round once more. " A terrible thing," he repeated.

He obviously had something else to say and I waited anxiously to hear it. At this moment, however, a head appeared at one of the upstairs windows and the old waiter scurried for his life.

Later I discovered the reason for his sudden exit. Hotel servants are forbidden to discuss political or economic questions with foreign visitors under pain of imprisonment. All the same, it

occurred to me that the Government would hardly penalise a citizen for attacking Hitler—which was obviously what the old man was going to do.

That, however, was where I had miscalculated.

I had left England with the impression that Austria as a whole was fiercely anti-Nazi and that the demonstrations in favour of Hitler were the work of a disaffected minority, inspired by conspiratorial agents. The rest of my colleagues were of the same opinion. We all said how shameful it was that poor little Austria should be bullied by a big bad Germany and took off our hats to Dollfuss for upholding his country's independence. Only gradually did we realise the underlying truth.

Our progress through the Tirol was a succession of long hours steeped in the beauty of snow-clad peaks, where slender churches raised exquisite spires to heaven and shrines and calvaries appeared on rocky spurs—each with their simple worshippers—and receptions in the villages. There was always a band in strange habiliments—some of the performers sported the uniforms of the Halberdiers who fought against Napoleon in 1809—a guard of boys and girls, and exquisite maidens with Alpine roses. Inevitably the Burgomaster spoke !

It became a ritual like *imbis* or *jause*, the afternoon refection of coffee and cake ; so that it seemed as though we had always moved in the same progression. A delegate—preferably German-speaking—would reply, healths were drunk, food was eaten—yodellers in marvellous form made the mountains ring.

The Tirol would have seemed the Playground of the Western World but for a curious political undercurrent, felt but not perceptible, until we took the road to Innsbruck, when high up on the mountain-side a swastika flared into view, deep cut into the ground. It was not a solitary symbol.

We seemed suddenly to have entered a Nazi region. On the doors in village streets, from remote huts perilously perched, the swastika proclaimed defiance.

At our next stop for *jause*, a young English-speaking waiter looked after us. Our host, who always modified his time-table so-called as the day went on, had graciously extended our stay for half an hour, so that the party might visit a neighbouring waterfall. I evaded the excursion, however, and over a cup of coffee had a chat with Charles—as he told me he was named. He had been for some years in various London hotels and was desperately eager to get back again.

"The hotel trade here has gone to pieces," he complained. "If only the Germans would come back!"

"Do you think that Hitler may lift the ban?"

"It would never have been imposed," he answered violently, "if our Government had handled things properly. Hitler's not to blame. There should never have been any quarrel between Germany and us. We're the same people, speaking the same language."

"Are you in favour of the Nazi regime?" I asked.

"Why not?" He stared at me pugnaciously. "You're a journalist and can tell the English people the truth. Here in the Tirol we're heart and soul with Hitler and what he's trying to do. He wants to make Germany a strong self-reliant nation. That's what we want to be. We're tired of being a poor weak little country, bullied and patronised by the big powers. . . ."

"You mean you want Austria to unite with Germany, to be included in the Reich?"

"That's what we all want—most of us anyway. But the Catholic Party, the landowners, the Jews and the nobility are against any understanding

with Germany. If they hadn't made fools of themselves the frontier wouldn't have been closed, and the hotel trade would have been booming." He polished a glass for the third time, keeping an eye on the door. "There's not a village in the Tirol that hasn't a Nazi group. They meet on the mountain-tops at dead of night, though even then they have to be careful. . . . Have you seen many uniformed men on your journey ? "

There had been, I remembered, quite a number, though as a rule they did not present a soldier-like appearance.

"They're the Heimwehr for home defence," said he. "Prince Starhemberg's special force. They've drafted a detachment of Viennese men to our district. Our own people would not have mattered. But the others are city bred and only too pleased to spy on us."

I remembered the swastikas high on the mountains and in the village streets.

"If it is known that anyone is a Nazi——"

"They're taken off to a concentration camp or thrown into prison." He stared at me grimly. "There's no such thing as political freedom in Austria to-day. If you're not for Dollfuss, you must keep your mouth shut—or take the consequences."

I thought of the dancers, the roses, the mediæval costumes, the burgomasters——

"But, but, everyone seems so contented."

"We don't wish to frighten away the few visitors there may be left. We've got our heads screwed on in the Tirol. Whatever happens we don't want any disturbance. We all know you journalists are going to tell your papers just how things are—well, you haven't seen any disturbances, have you ? "

"Not one," I answered truthfully.

"You won't if we can help it. . . . But that

does not say that we're always going to keep quiet. . . . If we were joined to Germany," his face grew positively ecstatic at the prospect and he fell to polishing the glass again. Soon after a stray pressman entered and we talked no more.

It was an amazing sidelight on the situation. It was hardly credible that the laughter-loving, easy-going Austrian should actually wish to coalesce with the humourless standardised Prussian.

Some of our contingent, however, had already come to that conclusion. They also had been talking to the natives, and one of the Czechs had had a graphic interview with a peasant, an ex-soldier and the Commandant of the local Nazis, who told him that given sufficient arms—machine-guns, rifles and ammunitions were smuggled over the border—they would demonstrate in force against the Government.

On the other hand, hotel managers, shop keepers, burgomasters and officials emphatically anti-Nazi were as obviously pro-Dollfuss. It looked as if the political differentiation were a class cleavage and the peasantry were Hitler's to a man.

This, however, still left the Socialist element unaccounted for. After Dollfuss and Starhemberg had ejected the Viennese Municipal Council many had been shot and hundreds imprisoned.

What had happened to the rest ?

I found the answer to the question at Innsbruck, the capital city of the Tirol.

A very pleasant rambling place, set like a jewel between protective hills, its shops are largely cosmopolitan, its hotels and pensions international. Alas, to-day they are all empty, peopled by the ghosts of a lost prosperity. Forlorn postcards appeal from solemn windows, mountaineering kits stare vacantly from famous shops, only in the industrial quarters where some of the factories are still busy is there any sign of the gay activity that

used to animate the place. Our hotel had a few stray visitors, a French family and a curious type of Englishman who held us up at the pistol point—so-called, as Henny would have said—and asked all and sundry if they would guess where he came from ! It was a tiring game, and the Czechs, the Jugo-Slavs and the Greeks would not play it. The Italians and the Roumanians, however, entered into the spirit of the thing, but not until the Chief-tain took a hand was he run to earth in a Buckinghamshire village. An interested spectator of this pleasantries was an Austrian in the authentic brown shirt of the Nazis, with a swastika on his arm. I watched him petrified, fearful that at any moment a policeman or a member of the Heimwehr might arrest him. I need not have worried. I learnt that he was the owner of a large engineering works that employed hundreds of men, and had interests in other concerns equally large.

"For that reason he is not interfered with," said my informant. "It would mean the stoppage of his plant and the bank would lose his account. He is the leader of a Nazi group who meet every evening. The headquarters are upstairs."

"And no one takes any notice ?"

"It would not pay anybody to interfere. Besides, the group does little but talk. They are not really active."

Just what being active meant I could only surmise. It was borne in on me, however, that the Nazi raids—bombs, skirmishes and the rest, supposedly organised by Hitler agents, might be the work of Austrian nationals !

That evening while my colleagues were at a reception miles up the mountains, I went to a little club run by an old Marxist. I had met him in Socialist circles in London, and if anyone could tell me what had happened to the "Comrades" since Dollfuss came to power, I knew he was the man.

My friend was delighted to see me and gave me some interesting details of everyday life. The censorship of the Press was as rigid as in Germany. Criticism of art and literature was still allowed, but individual expression of economic or political opinion was taboo. Public demonstrations were prohibited and clubs were suspect. The Socialists, however, like the Nazis, still held meetings in the towns, and propaganda sheets—brown and red—were circulated from hand to hand.

The association of these two parties in such complete antithesis struck me as odd. I was going to make further enquiry when Emile directed my attention to a quiet, capable-looking man who had just come in as an ex-member of the Socialist Committee in Vienna. He had with him a tall, fine-looking figure in a brown shirt—who wore the forbidden swastika on his arm! They were in deep and friendly conversation, quite obviously *en rapport*.

I turned to Emile for an explanation :

“They’re both against the Government,” he answered. “At the moment Nazis and Socialists work side by side.”

This astounding alliance is but one of the many conflicting factors in the Austrian situation to-day.

CHAPTER VI

Prisoners of Zenda I

I have never quite made up my mind whether our progress from province to province was regulated by a pardonable desire on the part of the railway authorities to show us as many of the national beauty spots as possible, or if they felt we were more likely to accept the appearance of external peace which dwelt upon the country if we were not given time to explore beneath the surface. Journalists, however, have their own way of defeating official programmes, and those of us who wanted to get at the underlying facts would drop out of the schedule, put in a day after the party had left, or before they arrived at a place, and talk to all sorts and conditions of persons.

To understand the ramifications of Austrian diplomacy, one has to remember that following the Peace the Socialists gained a huge majority in the municipal election of Vienna, where, for some years, they retained a complete ascendancy. It has never been denied by the most hostile critic that the municipal improvements were considerable. The finest working-class flats in the world were built, acres of slums cleared away, open-air nurseries and children's clinics founded, and an invaluable social service started which revolutionised the life of the poor.

Meanwhile, in the Parliament, the Socialists were in a big minority. The provincial towns and cities returned a small percentage of Socialist members,

but the villages and rural districts generally were solidly Conservative. The position arose, therefore, that a measure passed by the municipality would excite extreme hostility in Parliament. Vienna, however, being the key position, politically speaking, the Socialists held the day.

Meanwhile, in Germany, the Nazi Party began to make itself felt. At first some of the Austrian nobility, notably Prince Starhemberg, reacted to its principle of autocracy. It was thought possible that the establishment of Fascism might oust the Socialists and reassert the power of the Conservatives. Fear of German ascendancy, however, deflected their support, already weakened by the spreading of Nazi sympathy among the masses.

That the Austrian people reacted to Hitler was never a matter of general knowledge. Under the feudal system which, left over from the Emperor Franz Joseph still retains its grip, a policy of news suppression can be carried on which in an industrialised country is impossible. Thus the rest of Europe, outside the diplomatically informed, believed that the Austrian people loathed and hated the swastika as keenly as they loved and revered Dollfuss, the little peasant who, with the backing of the Catholic Party, became the nominee of the Tories—pledged as Chancellor to break Socialists and Nazis alike. The stories of Communist plots to seize the reins of government by bombs and assassinations had no substance in fact. Communism badly needs defining these days in an economic sense, but taken in its general significance as standing for social disruption and destruction, it may safely be said to have no following in Austria. The Socialist Party, thorough-going, respectable Marxists, have too much regard for what they feel should be national rather than class ownership of wealth, senselessly to annihilate the means and instruments

of production. Moreover, Austria, as an overwhelmingly Catholic country, will have nothing to do with the anti-God campaign associated with Communist tenets.

How far Dollfuss himself was convinced of the Communist danger remains doubtful. A shrewd but limited intelligence, he had the peasant's suspicion of the townsmen and an unreasoning fear of their power. That the Socialists would have combined with him against the Nazi protagonists seems certain. Against this possibility, however, was not only his own, but Prince Starhemberg's implacable resistance. This nobleman is, indeed, an interesting survival of the middle ages. He and his peers believe in the divine right of caste, and seem unable even to admit the existence of a belief in the equality of man. It was Starhemberg who was responsible for the formation of the Steel Helmets, the Chancellor's Body Guard, and later organised the Heimwehr.

The Socialists, as we know, were deposed, Parliamentary and municipal elections abrogated, and the Nazi purge begun, and while considerable sympathy was felt for the Marxists, outside opinion generally agreed that the Nazis who represented German aggression deserved all they got.

The longer I stayed in Austria however, the farther I went afield, the more people I talked with, the stronger grew my conviction that the majority of the nation were passionately pro-Nazi and would plump for joining Germany, or, if that were impossible, for the establishment of a Fascist regime on Hitler lines.

"We want discipline," protested an earnest young student. "We are too facile and easily distracted from our purpose. We have the tradition of defeat in our blood. Joined with our German brothers, we shall feel their iron will, their unconquerable spirit."

It is with considerable depression that I record these views on the Austrian situation. But, however much one may dislike a fact, it remains the ineradicable duty of a journalist to state it. The truth, as one sees it, must be recorded, and after long and careful investigation, I believe most firmly that were a free plebiscite taken to-morrow, 80 per cent of the population would vote for the establishment of Fascism and the closest possible union with the German Reich.

But beyond and apart from this is a detestation of the present Government and its senseless oppression, crude killings and utter inability either to organise the unemployed or to stabilise the national resources.

This is the bond which, at the moment, unites the Fascist and the Socialist, who co-operate not only in civil, but in military life. The Heimwehr, recruited from the unemployed, is riddled with Nazi-Socialist groups. Enlistment is practically compulsory ; too poor to pay the dole for more than a year, the State, after that period, has only the alternative of starvation to offer, with the problematical chance of earning 6d. a day and hard fare on road-making. Faced with such a choice, the workless flock into the Home Defence with good food and pocket money. Once they have joined, however, the malcontents gravitate towards each other and two divergent political camps coalesce against the Government.

You find the same *rapprochement* even in the Courts of Law. At Linz a number of Socialists accused of disaffection, tried by a Bench of Nazi magistrates, were all discharged. The Bench were discharged also—but the event has crystalised in the national consciousness.

When, however, the Bench is Tory, a change of front is noticeable. Nazi prisoners are let off lightly. Socialists receive a maximum sentence.

There is, however, another point of coalition between the parties. Prince Starhemberg and Dollfuss conceived the idea of forming the Fatherland Front, which is pledged to uphold the integrity of the country in face of any and every attempt at disruption. Like the German Nazi Party—outside the militarist section—it embraces all classes and directly influences chance of employment. Should a skilled mechanic be required and a number of out-of-works apply, only a Fatherland Front man is engaged, though his qualifications may be patently inferior to the other applicants. This means that all the unemployed in the towns, and the farm labourers in the country, flock in to the Party, without the faintest belief in the cause. This could not happen in Germany, where investigation takes place before party membership is granted, but the *laissez-faire* of the Austrian temperament prevents any such precaution, and as a consequence, the most anti-government factions are let in.

For this reason, Dollfuss could not, and his successor equally cannot, form a correct estimate of his civil support. The power of the present, like the late Chancellor, rests on the loyalty of 30,000 trained men constituting the regular army. While they are for the Government, the Government will remain in power, but if a split comes in the ministerial ranks—say between Starhemberg and Fey—the army may divide and anything may happen.

Anything, that is to say, that does not incur the opposition of the powers which, like hungry dogs, prowl round poor Austria's frontiers. As a democrat, it seems to me that if the Austrian people want to be allied to Germany, they should be allowed to do so. Italy, however, would oppose it, such an alliance would threaten her dominion over the Dolomites and precipitate an insurrection which, backed by German influence and am-

munition, might prove successful, and Mussolini would find himself compelled to choose between surrendering the Provinces or precipitating a European war.

A Socialist solution would incur the enmity of Germany, mass the opposition of all the reactionary forces of the nation, and long before the issue was fought out, Jugo-Slavia or Czecho-Slovakia would feel called upon to guard their frontiers so heavily that an "unforeseen" clash would follow, with a possible further dismemberment of the unhappy country, or, again, the prospect of a European war.

There is a third solution to the Austrian problem, put forward by the queerest and most out-of-date mentalities of this bewildering country. I encountered the first exponent of this alternative in the lovely little town of Klagenfurt, in Karinthia. This, however, came later. *En route* we paid a visit to Salzburg, perhaps the most gracious, cultured and lovable city in the country. There, again, was the same tale of loss of trade, the tragic falling off of visitors. Even the musical festival no longer drew the great crowds that used to swarm into the open-air theatre, invade the tiny home place of Mozart, and enjoy the river in its summer enchantment.

Among the many pictures stamped upon my memory, an incident at Salzburg stands out very clear. I was wandering in the old part of the town, close to the ancient cemetery with its historic monuments and strange peace, when two men in working clothes emerged from an alley, running swiftly towards the market place. A second later a small body of Heimwehr at the double passed in the same direction. The men were overtaken and removed.

"Nazis!" said one of the crowd, and shrugged his shoulders.

There had been, I learnt, a general round up of the Brown Shirts in the poorer parts.

Half an hour later I passed a group of men in the vestibule of the hotel in the Nazi uniform, openly flaunting the swastika. No one, however, arrested them. Like their colleague in Innsbruck, they were big industrialists and to interfere with them would have deranged local employment.

This class distinction in politics—frank and admitted—an amazing factor in the Austrian *mélange*, is a survival of that feudalism still rooted in the country. It arouses little indignation—except among the Socialists—indeed, I should say it would shock the national consciousness if a man of wealth or position were put on the same level as a mere peasant or common labourer. Socially the lord and his vassal, the employer and employee may meet at the same beer garden, drink the same brew of beer. Politically, the iron law of caste remains unbroken.

Close to the beautiful old city are the headquarters of a modern gliding school. Gaisberg takes its name from the hill, ideally situated, where hundreds of boys and girls and youthful pilots generally learn to navigate the miniature airplanes which travel incredible distances. Austria has forged ahead in this particular branch of aviation, and gliders fly regularly from Salzburg to Vienna. The bird-like planes, each with their youthful control, starting at the top, were pulled down the hill at an increasing momentum by elastic ropes, until—hey presto, the plane broke free, and bounding into the air sailed like a bird far into the distance, the clear voice of the pilot yodelling ecstatically.

From Gaisberg we were taken to Heilbron, the seventeenth-century palace of an archbishop, who in the playful spirit of his times planned a series of gigantic jokes, which, beginning with clockwork

fountains that suddenly played on the unwary from the depth of artificial grottoes, went on to mechanised fish and birds that swam and chirped as you approached. The gardens were a dream, herds of deer browsed in the park, everything was perfectly ordered and beautifully kept. Indeed, the care of the past is one of the notable traits of the Austrian temperament. It fits in somehow with their inability to keep appointments and their total disregard of any kind of scheduled arrangement. In this respect, they are like the Poles who, with the exception of the people of Poznan—under centuries of Prussian rule they acquired their rulers disciplinary methods—have the most amazing capacity for never carrying out their own programmes! This may be in both countries another heritage of feudalism or perhaps, as Machiavelli suggested, conquerors sometimes acquire the characteristics of the conquered.

It was quite in keeping with custom that instead of leaving Heilbron at twelve, we should have remained till two, and lunched at three. But the meal served in a lovely garden, under leafy trees, with the sound of water in the distance, made us forget anything like time. Generally our midday meal was the occasion of official speeches. On this occasion ceremony was cut out. Everyone seemed to burgeon. The Chieftain told an admiring crowd of Greeks and Hungarians of his adventures in the fifty-four countries he had visited, and an impassioned Pole—the facial image of Pilsudski—made three speeches, in his native tongue, in German, and in French.

"Pilsudski" was an orator of the old school, and spoke with tears not only in his voice but in his eyes—not infrequently they rained down his face into his plate. His chief rival in the speaking line was a Roumanian journalist with the appearance of an operatic star. He was known as Excellency,

and had a very charming wife who spoke at least five languages, including English. Sepa, who was an internationalist so far as female society was concerned, divided his interest impartially between the cosmopolitan charmers of the party and the native beauties.

It was early evening when we reached our next stopping place, Velden am Worthersee. On the shores of an enchanted lake, with glorious woods sloping to the water's edge, it used to be a rallying point for German holiday-makers. Now, however, the comfortable burly figures in truncated bathing dress are absent, and but few fortunate visitors are seen. It was a wonderful evening. We had dinner on a terrace overlooking the lake. The lights on the boats twinkled through the summer darkness, the food was good, the wine was excellent. . . .

And then the Burgomaster spoke !

Everyone seemed to reply. I listened to seven speeches and then, when finally an erudite Greek Professor stood up, I discreetly vanished with a local journalist who suggested we should have a talk. He gave me some amazing particulars. Socialist in sympathy, he insisted that it was not only his own and the Nazi Party who suffered under Government restriction, but the ordinary easy-going man in the street.

"Public discontent is growing. The uncertainty and confusion as to what the Government may do unsettles everyone. You may be in a job to-day and out of it to-morrow, not so much through uncertainty of trade as State manipulation of statistics. According to the returns, unemployment is decreasing. According to facts there's no improvement at all. What happens is that a man in work—any sort of work—may be scheduled as belonging to the Nazi or the Socialist Party. Very well, then his place must be taken by someone who



"FESTIVAL GOWNS"

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is *not*. Consequently, his employer is ordered to discharge him and engage a Fatherland Front man. The situation thus secured is added to the percentage of jobs found."

"And what happens to the original employee?"

"Concentration camp—or prison," he replied.

"Thus, according to departmental returns, employment decreases, the foreign Press publishes the figures and our Government points out the good that it has done. . . .

"The trouble is that a man is practically compelled to join the Front, especially if he has a wife and children—otherwise, he may disappear."

According to the journalist, some of the "outrages" attributed to German agents, the placing of bombs on the railway track, the attempted derailing of engines, were the work of local and unsuspected Brown Shirts.

"There's hardly ever any loss of life, you know," he said, "it's more a matter of demonstrating public feeling than anything else. Last week someone rolled a log across the main line. The express would have dashed right into it—but the engine-driver was warned, so he pulled up in time."

The incident did not surprise me. It seemed to me entirely Austrian. Occasionally, however, the softer side of the national character is swamped. There were repeated raids during our stay in the country. The news crept through, in spite of the censorship—it is indeed impossible to keep news from a journalist. We scent it as a lion scents meat !

On one occasion there was a severe scrap between a regiment of regulars and a detachment of Heimwehr. The latter, Nazi and Socialist, affronted by the Government men, attacked, and matters looked very nasty until, under the threat of machine guns, the Home Defence cleared off

with three dead and six wounded—casualties equalled on the other side.

It was difficult to visualise this internecine warfare in the pastoral surroundings of Velden. At Klagenfurt, however, life moved on different lines.

The hall of the inn where we assembled was huge, lofty and impressive. The walls were hung with hunting trophies, imperial stags with jutting antlers, boars' heads and small pathetic stuffed deer. The usual crowd of civic dignitaries received us, but two figures so conspicuously held our eyes that the rest were dwarfed to insignificance. A tall, slight, well-built man in the early thirties, fair-haired, blue-eyed, with a swift smile and an implacable mouth, was wearing the dress of a Styrian huntsman. He had come down from his mountain castle to meet us. In his green tunic, leather breeches and green felt hat, he looked a figure of romance, not of to-day, but of past centuries. With him was his wife, a very lovely little person, also in Styrian dress, a full skirt of red and white checked cotton, a corselet of green with finely embroidered blouse, and a red handkerchief on her beautifully curled hair. Round her throat was the most perfect jade and crystal necklace that, outside China, I have ever seen. The bearer of an old title, the Baron represented the canalised outlook of his class. He spoke English like a native, as did his wife. She was Dutch, not Austrian, and had met her husband in Java—this accounted for the jade—where he had held a post in a big Dutch firm.

His business experience—he had been out East for some years—had not in the slightest mollified his political opinions. He believed utterly and completely in the feudal system, with the right of the lord of the manor over the souls and bodies of his serfs. He was, I felt, prepared to die at any moment for his faith, which included loyal devotion to the representative of the House of Hapsburg, the

Archduke Otto. Democracy—equality—he had no use for such folly. The one form of Government given by God to man was absolute monarchy.

The Baron, as Sepa remarked, had stepped right out of Anthony Hope's *Prisoner of Zenda*. Young, ardent, he belonged to a past completely dead ; there are many others like him.

I shall never forget his keen face, flushed with an idealism that refused to reckon with the universe of to-day.

"When the Hapsburgs return, Austria will live again. We shall regain our lost territories and once more be a great people."

Meanwhile, he gave his allegiance to Dollfuss as embodying the nearest approach to his dearest beliefs. Moreover, with a cold magnificence he defied Germany, not for his caste alone, but in the name of his country.

"We are Austrians first," he exclaimed, "Germans a long way after. We are the heirs and inheritors of the Holy Roman Empire that established our culture and gave us our civilisation. The Germans are mere barbarians beside us. They never came within the sphere of Rome. They have lied to us, betrayed us, despoiled us. Never will we yield to them."

What, we asked, of the people, the workers and peasantry who were quite obviously Nazi ?

"They are ignorant," he answered, "and must be ruled. It is our destiny to do so. It is the weakness and fear of the ruling class that has brought Europe to this terrible pass."

He declined to discuss the possible opposition of the Czechs, Roumanians and Jugo-Slavs, mutually pledged to resist by force of arms the establishment of an Austrian Kingdom. He did not seem to think that was important. He was the kind, I felt, who, faced with the latest type of gun, would unflinchingly fall back on bows and arrows—if those

particular weapons of defence seemed more expressive of national culture.

The Baroness listened with the prettiest pride, and told me, in the pauses, of her husband's interest in his villagers. He had them taught to shoot, to ride, to swim, held competitions for them and encouraged them to practise local dances and songs. On her side she held sewing classes, scripture classes and instilled due reverence for pastors and masters into the young mind.

There was no arguing with the Baron. His ancestors, I was sure, had helped to drive the Turks back from Vienna with Prince Starhemberg's relations ! I sometimes wished the Turks had *not* been driven back !—or that all records of their valorous opponents had disappeared. The calm assumption of present-day superiority founded on dubious ancestral prowess is a little irritating.

Apart from politics, the Baron was the most delightful companion. A clever raconteur, we listened to his tales till long past midnight, by which time we had merged our various nationalities in Austrian wine and were ready to swear by Turkey, Greece, England, Jugo-Slavia and the rest !

The next chapter in our odyssey landed me at the late Emperor's Hunting Lodge near Bad-Ischl, a watering-place with every kind of mineral spring. Austria is full of these health resorts, which are associated in my mind with the Austrian Wilhelmina Stitch, a gentleman who kept on turning up in various pump-rooms with a rhymed thought for the day. I evaded him at Ischl, however, giving lunch a miss as well, and set off by myself to the Imperial Lodge. Set in a lovely natural park between green hills, flanked by grim mountains, the house itself is a simple, rather austere structure alien to the pictures of magnificence conjured up by the traditions of the Viennese Court.

: An elderly custodian took the price of admission

in the vestibule and handed me over to a pathetic-looking guide. We passed into an inner hall and up a staircase of which the walls were literally covered with heads and tails and horns and hoofs of all the animals Franz Joseph had annihilated. The suggestion of mass slaughter was a little overpowering. He must, I felt, have been a blood-thirsty old man. His shots, however, were faithfully recorded in a huge book, of which the last entry was dated 1910, when this incredible octogenarian brought down his final stag.

The only room in the royal suite without these mutilated remains was the boudoir of the Empress Elizabeth. The furniture was simple, elegant and undated. The walls were hung with landscapes, and vases of flowers gave an air of freshness and affection to the apartment, conspicuously lacking from the grim study adjoining, where his Imperial Majesty used to sit. Heavy, ponderous, painfully stiff, the room without a touch of colour bristled with a grim personality.

I pictured the bewhiskered presence seated at the writing-table signing away millions of lives. The memorable piece of furniture on which the Ultimatum to Serbia was sealed remains untouched—unconscious as was his Majesty that the document consigned his empire to dismemberment, his throne to extinction.

The Imperial bedroom had a different atmosphere. A little room, starkly furnished, there was something oddly pathetic about the narrow iron bedstead, Spartan mattress and meagre furnishings. The washing arrangements, a small basin and jug, seemed most inadequate—but after all, if his Imperial Majesty desired more extensive toilet provision, he could, I learnt, visit the bathing pool in the garden.

The guide, automatic in his information, had none of the idolatry of an old retainer. The

Hapsburgs I should say meant nothing to him ; nor did they seem to count for much at Ischl generally. The visitors' book showed that no one had been to the Lodge for weeks, and the names already inscribed were foreign.

The idea that the Royal line would be restored did not catch on at all, locally speaking. My colleagues, British, Czechs and Swiss had all been gathering information, of which the net result was that the people did not seem to want the Archduke at any price.

"It's a fairy tale," said a very pretty girl who had been at school in England. "Our mountains are full of them, but this one will never come true. You see, no one believes in it."

And yet the Lodge in the mountains is the gathering point of all the legitimist hopes. Our friend the Baron and his party really believe that the King will come into his own again !

With the exception of China, I should say that there are more political cross-sections, under-currents and divergent factors in Austria than in any other country.

Up in the mountains of Styria, right against the German frontier where the two peoples are separated only by barbed wire fences, we plunged straight into a Nazi hotbed. To all appearances, the town of Mariazell with its graceful cathedral, picturesque inhabitants and soft yet imposing scenery, was calmness itself. The lights flashing from the hill-tops seemed to us welcoming beacons, and our entertainment was, if possible, even more hospitable than ever before.

It was after dinner when the Burgomaster had spoken with impassive eloquence of Austrian stability and peace that I made a disquieting discovery. Up and down the corridor outside my room a soldier in full equipment, with steel helmet and rifle, was doing sentry go. Other sentries—

upstairs, downstairs and in the kitchen pantry—made the atmosphere electric. What was going to happen ?

I asked for information. But here I was met by a masterly inactivity. Soldiers ? Oh, yes, there were soldiers. A few officers were staying in the hotel. In the streets still more soldiers—the real article, not the Heimwehr—were posted. The whole place looked as though it were under martial law.

But by the next morning not a steel helmet was to be seen. The town lay smiling and serene in the sunlight. We learnt, however, that a raid had been expected. Nazis from over the border were to meet their Brown Shirt comrades and hold a demonstration. It was feared that the hotel might be attacked, which would have meant that the incident would have been wired to every European capital—with disconcerting results on the already depleted tourist trade.

As it was, nothing happened and only the soldiers lost a night's sleep !

CHAPTER VII

The Little Chancellor

IT was at Linz that I met a personage whose dignities and titles fill a page in the *Almanach de Gotha*. Principalities and powers usually leave me unimpressed—but there was something more to this particular survival than social distinction. He was the apotheosis of reaction—compared to his ingrained Toryism, the romantic Baron was as whey to wine.

He entertained the entire party to dinner on board a Danube steamer. It rained, alas! quite copiously, but between the showers the night grew clear and old castles, fantastic ruins gleamed from the shores, and the sudden scent of flowers drifted across the stream. Our host, among other things, was a brass-hat in the Heimwehr. He had served with great distinction during the War and his tunic was covered with medals. Tall, upright, with an impeccable carriage and a little rigid moustache, he spoke six languages with equal ease and knew every capital in Europe. He was quite *au fait* with events and knew the exact brand of democracy current in each country. But he knew these things with the surface of his mind only. They never permeated his subconsciousness.

He gave us a sumptuous meal, served with the appropriate vintages, and told us—turning from English to Italian, French or Hungarian with equal ease—of the enormities of German intrigue. He had been in command of the Heimwehr, when

Linz was threatened with an attack from combined Nazi and Socialist forces.

He was coldly indignant that such a rabble should dare to attack his native city, but though wrath with the Brown Shirts, his special condemnation was for the Reds—as he called the particularly mild brand of Austrian Marxists. His point of view was amazing.

“The Socialists almost ruined our country,” he said gravely. “If they had not been deprived of power in February last, God knows what would have happened. The country was becoming impossible. Take Vienna, for instance,”—he paused to toast the Greek professor in his native tongue—“no one of decent birth or education could stand the life. You will realise,” he turned to me, “that it is impossible to run even the most moderate establishment with a domestic staff of less than fourteen?”

He seemed to expect an answer, though why he should suppose a mere author-journalist should have any personal knowledge of such an establishment, I cannot imagine. Politeness demanded, however, that I should make some kind of response. So I smiled politely and incredulously, as though I were accustomed to a retinue of butlers, mahouts and elephants.

“Imagine then to what we were reduced when the Socialist municipality imposed a tax on every servant over the number of ten. *Ten!*” he repeated, and motioned a steward to fill my glass with champagne.

“I put it to you that that sort of thing is an intolerable tyranny, besides adding to unemployment. We simply could not afford to pay the tax, so we had to do without proper service. Moreover, the money went to the building of flats reserved for the Socialists. They were designed as fortresses,” he added. “During the February rebellion they

sheltered hundreds of reds who fired on the Government troops."

"The flats are always quoted as marvellous examples of good housing," I ventured.

"Who paid for them?" was the reply. "Not the workers. The money came from *our* pockets. We were taxed almost out of existence."

He broke off to drink to Mussolini with our Italian artist, who, combining a genius for caricature with a tenor voice of operatic robustness and range, at any moment would break into *Pagliacci* or *Aida*.

The General continued his dissertation. The enormities of the Socialists had necessitated the curtailing of entertainment in the capital with its repercussion on the tradespeople. Fortunately the ravages of the Reds had been confined to Vienna. They had no footing in the provinces, "otherwise—we should have had to shut down our homes." The speaker himself lived in an old castle in the midst of huge estates, with hunting, shooting, rich farms and priceless wine cellars. There, I should say, echoes of the workaday struggle for existence never permeated. Quite obviously he had no contacts with the particular world we represented, and though he alluded politely to the *Times*, he had, I should say, no use for any journalist. Though perfectly polite, I felt he regarded us as microbes liable at any moment to become noxious! Papers primarily bought by the people suggested all sorts of Red ideas. He believed in the censorship of the Press and in an aristocracy of Government. The older the family, the greater the governing capacity. His own solution of Austria's internal troubles was obviously military law, with short shrift for anyone who questioned armed authority.

Somehow this courteous, polished gentleman in the early forties, who so perfectly entertained us as his country's host, suggested the Austria of that grim period seventy-five years ago, when Hungarian

women prisoners suspect of helping Kossuth in his struggles for national independence had been flogged ; the Austria in whose market-places Hungarian rebel fingers, jewelled with rings and dripping blood, were sold.

After all, these gruesome trophies were displayed as recently as 1860, and while that particular expression of savagery is no longer modish, an equal barbarism exists in Germany, Austria and other parts of the world to-day !

The General did not speak openly of a Hapsburg return to the throne. But I should say that, like the Baron, he is a staunch legitimist.

It is, I suppose, part of the legacy of the ramshackle Empire which Franz Joseph finally disintegrated, that Austria should be so tragically disunited. I could find no possible common meeting ground between the people and the ruling class, while the industrial section, employer and employed, were equally divided.

But the complexities and divagations of the situation are increased tenfold in Vienna, where the Jewish element comes into play.

Our last stopping-place *en route* for the capital was Graz. An ancient city with a market a thousand years old, its narrow streets, queer alleys and unexpected green and leafy vistas make it a pleasant, drowsy place. That it can wake up, however, recent events have shown. Some of the fiercest fighting between the Brown Shirts, the Socialists and the soldiery recently took place in this lovely spot : which in spite of its traditionalism is the centre of a strong and growing Marxist Party.

It was late afternoon when we reached Vienna, and that lovely city was at her best. I had seen her last after the War, when famine stalked the streets and haggard faces, pressed against restaurant windows, overlooked those fortunate ones

who had food to eat. Poverty is still frequently present, but sheer starvation does not appear in public. The streets, beautifully clean and well kept, showed few threadbare though many shabby garments, but I noticed that the cafés were almost empty and the luxury shops deserted. You could count the people taking coffee, the familiar glass of water at their side. But the consciousness of poverty and shabbiness was presently swept aside in a marvellous experience.

That evening we went to the Opera, to hear Mozart's *Magic Flute*. The vast house, crowded from floor to ceiling, was a revelation. Here at last was Austria's democracy, her bond of national union. Workers in blouses, girls in jumpers, women in chic gowns and coats, crowded the seats. The show always starts early, which means that office workers can come straight from business without waiting to eat. The buffets are besieged in the interval by hunger-stricken devotees who devour mounds of ham rolls, stacks of sausages, with coffee and lager, for fifteen minutes' hard going all the time. No one wears evening dress, and everybody is friendly, enthusiastic and keyed up to enjoyment. The *Magic Flute*, though heard a hundred times, brings to the people the same fresh delight and appreciation. The prices—no matter what the economic pressure—remain popular and the standard of production is the finest in the world. The Opera is subsidised, but even the reactionaries do not grumble at the strain on the rates. They do not even suggest that, like the mad King of Bavaria, operatic stars should sing to them alone, but allow peasants and workers to participate in the enjoyment. The rapt devotion of the house that night was manifest, not a shuffle or a cough was heard. It was an enchanted evening that seemed to soften and assuage the city's perplexities and suffering.

The morning, however, brought back the grim facts of hunger—grinding hunger and want. Unemployment is acute, especially among the intelligensia. The insured worker gets the dole for a year—but the intellectual out of a job gets nothing. The men, some of them with University degrees, grasp eagerly at the chance of an office boy's position, and patiently lick stamps or file letters. The more fortunate earn a few shillings by teaching or restaurant work. The women try to let lodgings—crowding the family in cramped quarters—to earn the rent. They also do needlework and sell on commission. Some of them thankfully hire themselves as cooks or waitresses, snatching at the hope of sufficient food. Most of these derelicts were once comfortably off. The men held official positions, or had private incomes from stocks and shares, or from a small estate. All have gone, and without the hope of an adequate livelihood, they can only cling desperately to life.

The hotels are hard hit and the more expensive restaurants have little business. The cheaper variety do fairly well, but there an odd situation has arisen.

The Jews who form 25 per cent of the population are for the Government to a man, and, at the time I was in Vienna, regarded Dollfuss with sheer idolatry as their shield and buckler against a Nazi regime. It is they who find the money for the Heimwehr, which absorbs unemployed Brown Shirts and Reds alike, and any additional amounts which may be necessary for the extension and upkeep of the force. But the Jews take a long view, and rather than rely solely on Prince Starhemberg's protection, have evolved a plan of reprisal before any persecution has taken place !

The café and refreshment trade generally is in their hands and Israel in Council has decided to

turn out Christian employees and re-staff with their own race. This not infrequently means considerable upheaval. In one case a proprietor was told by a committee of his clients that if his Austrian chief of staff was not discharged, the group would go elsewhere for their daily meal. The proprietor, a just and kind-hearted man, tried to postpone the sentence, but the committee were adamant and finally the young man had to go, without the hope or chance of another job. Where the clientèle is principally Jewish, these displacements please everybody except the discharged ; when, however, some of the habitués are Christian, they complain and change their locale.

As a set-off to this boycott, there is an attempted elimination of Jewish professors and public officials. Thus, when a post falls vacant, the selected candidate will often hold less distinguished qualifications than certain of his rivals who, though brilliant, are Jewish. Moreover, if a Socialist is arrested for treason—with or without evidence—if he be a Jew his punishment is far heavier than that of a Christian. All things considered, the position of the Jews in Vienna is distinctly nerve-racking. They pay large sums for protection which does not protect and may at any moment leave them exposed to the fury of a Nazi outbreak.

Meanwhile, while Nazi-Fascism fights Feudal-Fascism and the Judæo-Christian feud continues, the Socialists steadily hold their own. Chased like wild beasts into hiding-places, they still cling to their economic faith, and by all accounts, though in great secrecy, are making converts. It is difficult indeed to be impervious to the effects of their work in Vienna. Under their rule, welfare clinics were established, day nurseries, open-air schools, every kind of provision for the physical and mental development of the child. Many of these institutions are continued—under State auspices, together

with young people's swimming, hiking, tennis and gymnastic clubs. They are no longer known as Socialist centres, but as Christian dépôts. Otherwise, things go on as before !

Housing, however, is at a standstill, and the huge, spacious blocks of dwellings which emphasised the Socialist era have come to a stop. I found nothing standardised about these congeries of human habitation. The eye is never tired with straight lines ; the fourth side of a square will suddenly become a curve, or drive off at an angle amazingly unexpected. The flats range from two rooms, kitchen, bedroom, sitting-room and scullery, to four. The walls are painted or tiled, electric light is everywhere and hot water is laid on. There is not a dark corner to be found, the maximum of sunshine flooding through wide windows. Huge balconies are filled with flowers and creepers. Beautifully kept, each home is a specimen of Austrian housewifery, from the porcelain stove to the linen bed-pillows. Each building has separate bath- and wash-houses, used regularly by the tenants, thus saving valuable space in the construction. Dignified, gracious—as H.R.H. the Prince of Wales recently remarked, Vienna's house planning offers a solution for the London slum problem.

Some of the buildings showed traces of the February bombardment, but for the most part dilapidations have been cleared away, walls repaired, gashed paint renewed. The rents, however, have been raised. Under Socialist rule the flats built out of the rates were let at a figure which, while it allowed for repairs and redecoration, structural improvements and general upkeep, left no margin for profit. The dwellings were self-supporting and the tenants—even those on the dole—were able to pay their way. A two-roomed domicile averaged twelve Austrian shillings (twenty-

four to the £) each month, rising to twenty shillings for four or sometimes five rooms.

Chancellor Dollfuss, however, increased the figure, not for economic, but rather for political reasons. His friends the legitimists felt the need for paying back old scores. The memory of the domestic servants' tax rankled.

There had been, I was told, a general comb-out of Socialist households, who were replaced by Fatherland Front families. But in the end the change cancelled out. The new tenants were the same as the old ! Like the Heimwehr, the Party is riddled with Socialists and Nazis who join the Front for protective purposes and mutually agree not to betray one another.

The workers, however, are not the sole tenants. There is a strong contingent of middle-class and professional inhabitants and groups of University students who take a co-operative flat and arrive home at all hours of the night. They bring grist to the porter's mill, however. At midnight the gates of the courtyard are closed. To open them incurs the cost of twopence.

The most imposing of all the blocks is Karl Marx house, with a statue of the Father of Socialism at the entrance. Neither the name nor the statue have been eliminated. The building was badly battered in the February fight, but the effigy escaped disfigurement. Austrian good-nature and laxity is responsible for the oversight which permits the two offences to remain.

I reflected that had Vienna been a German city the flats would inevitably have been rechristened. Hitler Hof would have replaced Karl Marx Hof, Adolf's image would have appeared on the old man's pedestal. As it is, the Socialist landmarks remain ; the Socialist tenants are returning ; some day the rents may fall to the old Socialist figure.

Meanwhile the beauty and the tragedy of Vienna



"EVERYONE GOES TO A WEDDING"

See page 137

each day grew more vivid. It became increasingly clear that under existing economic conditions the city cannot subsist. More and more I felt the shadow of hunger and hopelessness creeping over the spacious lovely streets, memorials of an epoch finally closed. And yet so fresh, so appealing is Vienna that she is still vital though touched with the first symptoms of decay. For all her art, her science, her talent for happiness and charm, the worm of death is at her roots. How can she live ? How feed and clothe her people ?

There is so little foundation for hope. The boundaries of poverty and caste deny material expansion. Each day has its toll of suicides ; youths on the threshold of life who cannot see a future ; grown men worn out with days and weeks and months of striving for a bare subsistence. The horror of the place in which the Peace allied statesmen disjointed the country as a child delimbs a doll, becomes manifest and undeniable in tragic ghost-ridden Vienna.

The distinguished soldiers, politicians and professors whom we met said nothing as to the national problems. All they wanted—all everybody in authority seemed to want—was a return of the tourist trade, to which end Press representatives of other—and in some cases excessively mountainous countries—had been touring the Tirol, though why the Swiss, the Czechs, the Jugo-Slavs and the Italians, all provided with home-grown peaks of their own, should want to scale the Austrian, was a puzzle. This, however, was too practical a consideration for national *naïveté* !

We were let off lightly in the matter of receptions at Vienna, and not until the close of our stay, at an enormous banquet, was there a spate of speeches. Then, however, oratory was loosed in full flood. All sorts of dignitaries were present, including the man of the moment, Prince Starhemberg. I had

pictured him as a romantic-looking figure with the dashing carriage of a cavalry officer and great personal magnetism. He would, I felt, suggest his proud and ancestral house, which—I was tired of hearing it—had preserved Europe from the infidel in the sixteenth century. But I found neither romance nor distinction in the slight, almost boyish soldier. He struck me as insignificant though tall; a long clean-shaven face abruptly terminating in a receding chin, hair thin on the temples and an irritability of manner—there is nothing about him that suggests a leader of men. He is, however, a social idol in Vienna. A good dancer and fond of sport, he gives large and opulent parties at his town house and his country mansions.

Beside him sat General Fey, the Chancellor's right-hand man, who carried out a policy of blood and iron against the Socialists. Square-shouldered, thick-set, with a stiff military bearing, he is the typical army man; trained to routine obedience and unable to think quickly.

Prince Starhemberg delivered a few kind words—but Fey was silent. For the rest, the Burgomaster testified and delegates of all the nations spoke their piece.

And then, feeling like children let loose for a party, we motored *en masse* to Grinzing, the charming suburb of Vienna, famous for its wine gardens, the Prince and a large party leading the way. A favourite haunt of theatrical folk, who drive out after the show, all sorts and conditions foregather at the little tables under the trees. That evening, however, the weather was cold and wet and we were driven indoors to a huge beer hall with heavy oak beams, whitewashed walls and long tables set with hundreds of glasses. We laughed and drank and thoroughly enjoyed ourselves, Austrians and internationals shared genial comradeship and political doubts, and economic

difficulties were forgotten. Even Henny was pleased. He'd been promised a job and hoped shortly to make his "bride so-called" his wife.

The next evening—our last in Vienna—we were entertained at the Rat Haus. The occasion was not so formal but far less joyous. The huge room lined with the portraits of innumerable ancestors had a dreary atmosphere. There was a sense of tension, everyone seemed to be watching the door as though expectant of bad news. I was parked at a table with some of the Town Councillors, who told me stories of the historic figures on the walls.

"Will the portrait of the present Chancellor be added?" I asked.

"Surely. . . . He will be here to-night, we hope," answered an alderman.

Whoever else might be sceptical of the qualities of Dollfuss as a ruler, the councillors obviously believed in his genius, though that night they spoke more of his piety and patriotism than of his ministerial ability. His progress from a local notability to Chief of the State may be regarded as spectacular but not surprising. Assiduous, industrious, devoted to the Church, he became secretary to the district branch of the Catholic Party, from whence, backed by the hierarchy, the landowners and the legitimists, he climbed to dizzy eminence.

It was a long dinner of many courses and I was beginning to wish it were over when a general stir ran through the room. Everyone rose; a tired-looking little man entered, and took the seat of honour.

Dollfuss had arrived.

I was not impressed by the diminutive size of the Chancellor. He was too well proportioned to appear freakish. It was the suggestion of forlorn loneliness that gripped me. His eyes wandered round the room seeking, as it seemed to me, for a

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sense of security. He spoke quickly and energetically and listened with quiet appreciative attention. But he was not at ease. Both spiritually and physically he seemed to feel alone—rather like a lost child who wants to go home. Capable, industrious, of precise intelligence, he was never a statesman nor a leader. Chance and the moment pushed him into power.

The suggestion of isolation was strengthened at close quarters. I was presented to him with the rest and he welcomed us all very kindly. But he still seemed unsure and I was suddenly conscious of the resemblance for which I had been vaguely seeking. He was incredibly, tragically like "Kipps," H. G. Wells' little cockney who, suddenly forced into the social limelight, had hard work to restrain his impulse to run away.

Poor Dollfuss ! The creation of other people's ambitions, the tool of their desires, it will never be known how much the policy of bloodshed and repression which disfigured his years of office was forced on him, how much it was the outcome of his own hates and fears.

Behind him towered the figure of Fey, over him was the shadow of Starhemberg, cynical, smiling, and openly arrayed against him the peasantry of the same stock from which he came, begrudgeful of his success, bitter because of the chasm he had set between them and their German brothers.

But, as someone reminded me, there were always the Steel Helmets and the Heimwehr !

Exactly what reliance could be placed on the Home Defence Corps, history has proved. The tragic story of the Chancellor's assassination which broke on the world a fortnight later left untold many significant details. It was said that the murderers of Dollfuss had "stolen" Heimwehr uniforms to the number of a hundred and fifty, and

so gained entrance to the Chancellory. Had it been a matter of a dozen uniforms, the statement might have held water. As it was, even the laxity of Austrian discipline could hardly have passed unnoticed the absence of over a hundred. The men who killed the Chancellor obviously belonged to one of the disaffected groups, which, in the curiously aimless fashion with which Austrian affairs are usually conducted, launched an offensive for which they had not arranged proper support.

I should say few of our party were surprised at the end of the Chancellor. We all had the impression that he was a transitory figure on the political stage. The sequel to the end of his career was marked with the barbarism of that mediæval Austria which still remains. Hundreds were hanged by slow strangulation, and thousands driven into concentration camps. Ferocious feudalism, traditional peasant art, the suppression of liberty, the refinement of generations of culture, are among the component parts of the present-day Austria. Under sane economic conditions, psychological and political differences would inevitably adjust themselves ; as it is the people as a whole cannot support themselves, nor does the capitalist system seem able to devise a method by which this can be done.

Externally, poor Austria is regarded as a promising bone by the many hungry dogs eager and anxious for the opportunity to snap her up. Interiorly, she is the prey of as many and as diverse interests. Exploited territorially and commercially by the landowners in the countryside and by vested interests in the cities, the residuum of unemployed steadily grows, and discontent increases.

The people snatch at the pabulum of Fascism ; to be a Nazi seems to them to be secure. But all through the tangled web of conflicting desires and

ambitions one thing remains stable—the exploitation of labour not for the benefit of the community but for the profit of class. And whichever brand of Fascism triumphs, exploitation will remain.

I left Vienna the following afternoon. The party had broken up, spreading to every point of the compass. I decided, however, not to return immediately to England. I felt that to have been to Austria and leave Hungary unvisited was to see only half of the picture. I wanted to catch the morning train to Budapest, but Austrian wheels cannot be made to move quickly, and the tickets for my journey home had not arrived. There had been a general distribution the previous evening, but mine were somehow overlooked.

Henny had disappeared. Our friend from the Austrian railways had gone also. It was as though the earth had opened and swallowed them up! I had said farewell to my colleagues who would have helped me in the emergency and hurried in desperation to the hall porter.

Where could I find the presiding genius of the expedition—his office, his home address?

They were unknown—even to the hotel porter, the repository of all human secrets. At least he said so, though whether his ignorance was real or diplomatic it was impossible to say.

Meanwhile, I had the name of our railway magnate, and determined not to be defeated, I visited all the shipping, motor and tourist offices until I tracked him to his lair. He was not in the least surprised at my arrival. With true Austrian charm he explained how delighted he was to see me, quite oblivious that his forgetfulness had delayed me for hours.

It was my own lack of co-ordination, however, that nearly held me up at the last moment. I had arrived at the station, dashed into the train—within a few minutes of starting, when I discovered

that my passport was missing ! Without that ridiculous survival how could I hope to avoid arrest—if not in Hungary in Nazi Germany !

Austria, however, was good to me. A breathless porter, followed by a taxi-man with a jovial smile and a red face, leapt into the carriage, my passport held aloft. I had left it in the car and the driver had returned at breakneck speed to give it to me.

I thanked him humbly and in more substantial fashion—we shook hands and the train started.

My last glimpse of Vienna was the vision of his jolly face !

CHAPTER VIII

“ . . . Peasants, nobles, priests and kings ”

EFFICIENCY is the hall-mark of Hungarian administration—on the railways at any rate. Long before we reached Budapest, I was handed a well-written guide to the city, with a list of hotels, baths, scheduled according to tariff, restaurants, museums, theatres and other places of entertainment.

Hungary's tourist trade is still considerable, in spite of world depression. It is not the country's main source of income, but, all the same, adds so largely to the national revenue that the municipal authorities co-operate with hotel managements in arranging every possible comfort and entertainment for foreign visitors. The natural inducements are considerable. Hot springs and mineral waters abound. Providence seems to have catered for every kind of physical ill, and all the spas are sumptuously fitted with up-to-date pump-rooms, inviting baths and the general accompaniments of modern luxury. Moreover, prices everywhere are moderate, especially for the English, the exchange being in our favour, while, as a nation, we are liked and welcomed.

Budapest is one of the dream places of the world, with a magical, almost unreal beauty. Built on both sides of the Danube, you may look from Pest over the river towards Buda, cascaded from her topmost hills down to the water-side with streams of electric lights. Against the skyline are the tall towers of fabulously ancient ruins, and in the middle distance illuminated fountains foam and

tumble ; the river glistens with enchantment, and, overhead, the sky is deeply blue.

I watched the panorama of beauty from the terrace of the Hungaria Hotel, overlooking the embankment, where, of an evening, the people take their ease—townsfolk and country dwellers, smart women in Paris gowns, simple girls with sun-kissed faces and luxuriant hair, peasants in marvellous garments, stiff with embroidery, and here and there the figure of a gipsy ineradicably individual.

The air was soft and warm ; the atmosphere impregnated with the sun had an intense exhilaration and, as a final touch of enchantment, a Tzigane orchestra began to play.

I had heard—who has not—of the marvels of gipsy music. I had even experienced its effect at an Hungarian café in Bratislava. That, however, was but a breath compared with the torrent of melody that flowed across the terrace over the Danube. I had half-expected the musicians to appear in picturesque costume ; Hussar jackets and top-boots at the least, but they were soberly clad in conventional dinner-jackets—the gipsy soul revolts at the idea of a uniform.

In the old days, it seems, it was the custom for a great noble to send for a gipsy fiddler to play to him over his wine. The nobleman would sit and drink and listen till the music brought such an effulgence of emotion that he would clasp the musician's hand, bid him be seated, and take wine. At that moment, the gipsy was not only a fiddler, but a guest and a gentleman. For that reason, any sort of bandsman's dress is taboo. No gentleman would wear such a rig-out, and no one wearing it could drink with Hungary's old nobility.

I sat late that night watching the gay scene on the embankment, the fresh arrivals crowding the hotel terrace. Family groups ate goulash, a

marvellous stew with red and green peppers, duck livers and other national dishes. A coterie of tourists, distrustful of experiment, ordered chicken and salad and other exclusively British items.

Food in Hungary is among the best you can have. Ducks and chickens, vegetables and fruit, soup and ice-cream, are served to perfection, with all kinds of Hungarian delicacies, while the wines and liqueurs from Tokay to *vin ordinaire* are celestial. I am thus lyrical, because, as I discovered later, this abundance is not confined to the hotel, or, indeed, to any class. The whole country literally flows with milk and honey. Land cultivation has reached a high level of production everywhere, and though wages in the rural districts are terribly low, supplies are so plentiful that, even there, no one need go hungry.

It is cheap food that makes life possible for the city unemployed. There is no dole in Hungary ; State finances are too restricted to allow the smallest contribution to the out-of-work. Those who have no jobs must fend for themselves. Nobody starves, however ; every townsman has friends or relations in his native village who will help with parcels of meat, poultry, etc. Rents, moreover, are low, and public opinion prevents the eviction of the poor. There are also municipal dépôts in Budapest, and other towns, where the destitute are served with free meals, eaten on the premises or taken home.

Even so, you feel the creeping tragedy of the dispossessed. Against the beauty and the vigour of life in the capital, with its culture, magnificent buildings, fine shops, and wide open streets, desolation stands stark. Young men, ashamed of enforced idleness, group moodily at street corners ; beggars of all ages tragically ask alms ; ancient crones feebly sweep crossings, and old men search the gutters for waste paper.

In this Budapest resembles other European cities. She has, however, a special type of unemployed precipitated by the outcome of the Peace. If Austria were dismembered by Versailles, Hungary has been crucified. Slices of her national territory have been distributed among the surrounding countries—even Austria received a small portion in the hope that such expropriation might foment ill-feeling in her victim ; Jugo-Slavia and Czecho-Slovakia have also benefited, but the most flagrant partition was made in favour of Roumania, who was given the rich province of Transylvania, with a population of 1,663,576, admittedly Magyar in race, language and type of civilisation. Roumania, as the world knows, was a menace to the Allied Cause through the War, and the secret reasons which prompted this dreadful sacrifice to rapacity, the particular group of vested interests which demanded it, is still a mystery to the uninitiated. The cruel fact of Hungary's truncation remains with the army of refugees who, penniless and in rags, have crowded to the city. To this number has been added the latest fruits of Fascist fury, those unhappy people who, domiciled as peaceful citizens in Jugo-Slavia, have been driven, like cattle, across the border.

There is nothing that the Transylvanian refugees can do to earn their bread. Employment for them would mean the wholesale displacement of others. During the day they pick up a few pence from odd jobs, manual or otherwise ; their food they get at the municipal centres, and, at night, they find a bed in the shelters for the homeless.

I chanced on one of these places unexpectedly. I had been to the Fishers' Bastion, a landmark of the city, on a perfect summer morning, and, wandering idly, found myself in that network of alleys which inevitably marks a European slum. The Fishers' Bastion, a modern memorial to ancient

times, stands by the quay to which the fishers bring their catch. Long flights of steps rising from the shore of the Danube lead up to the stone pavilions—set round with statues of great men—the roofs of which commemorate the first beginnings of the Magyar race when, nomads of the desert, they trekked all day under a burning sun, to camp at night in tents. And as, in ages past, those slim, stout shelters reared defiance to attack and offered refuge to the wanderer, so, to-day, their images in stone signify the same proud challenge and embracing hospitality. Always I felt this underlying pride of the desert, its strength, and its tenacity. Behind the polished surface of a great civilisation, I sensed a racial instinct that goes down to the very roots of primitive humanity, at once aggressive and protective; just as the Magyars in their desert tents succoured the wounded and beat against the foe, so their descendants to-day afford refuge to the defeated.

In a mean street of small buildings, a tall house with clean windows and fresh paint stood conspicuous. Through the open doorway shabby-looking men kept disappearing, entering apparently unquestioned, as though they were at home. I caught a glimpse of pleasantly coloured blue walls, and as the general atmosphere seemed friendly, I joined the stream, and crossed the entrance. A tall man of middle-age, who seemed to be checking in the flock, smiled at me, but shook his head when I began to speak, and motioned to a spare-looking figure with eyes from which all hope had been extinguished. He had a pale, refined face and a cultured voice.

"You would like to go over this place?" he said. "It is a lodging-house where poor men may sleep without charge."

Obviously educated, and perfectly mannered, his clothes were green with wear, and barely held

together. He was, so he told me, one of the many men who, expelled from Transylvania, had fled to Budapest. He had held a big position in the mining world, but, fortunately, he had not married, so that when the smash came and he was thrown out neck and crop by the Roumanians, he suffered alone. Very gentle, and indescribably resigned, there was for him no future, no hope of a job at home, no chance abroad. He was one of many whose tragedy of wasted effort is a pitiless symptom of modern economics. Talented, resourceful, trained, Hungary can find no use for these unwanted though there are roads to be made, houses to be built and industries to be organised.

I followed my guide along a wide corridor into a lofty dormitory, clean and airy, and, in the winter, heated by steam pipes. The bedsteads were of iron, the mattresses filled with straw—changed every week—were not too lumpy, and the sheets were clean, the blankets soft, while the pillow, also straw, was bearable. The reason why straw rather than wool or flock is used is familiar to anyone acquainted with the life of the destitute, internationally stamped with a terrible similarity ; these materials are breeding-grounds for lice and bugs, and as hair mattresses cost a high price, the only alternative is often fresh straw.

There were no texts on the walls, blue like the corridor, and moral maxims were conspicuously absent. The chairs were few, but the windows were wide, and sun and air streamed through with a pleasant freshness. This particular place held fifty beds. Other houses were larger or smaller, according to the needs of the district. The lodgers, poor souls, are permanent rather than casual, and what few coppers they earn are made in the neighbourhood.

“ Only very little,” said my friend. “ Very often we earn nothing at all. . . . But we must not grumble.”

The refugees usually congregate together, the ordinary out-of-works gravitating to different centres. Not that there is any official differentiation as to caste, but in Budapest, as in London, or elsewhere, like tends to like. The unemployed labourer, shop assistant, clerk or professional man inevitably goes with his kind.

Meals are not to be had in these shelters, which are supported from the rates. The lodgers, however, are given dinner and supper tickets which they exchange for food at the municipal dépôts.

Hungary deals with her unemployed in a human fashion, but in this country, which, though painfully shorn of natural wealth, is still highly productive, it is an amazing corollary of capitalism that there should be any unemployed at all.

I found, however, that this particular problem does not seem to stir or interest public opinion. Nationally speaking, the people do not appear to desire any political change. The Communist regime of Bela Kun, who, from all accounts, was crassly ignorant of economics, has implanted a horror of State ownership among peasants, workers, aristocrats and middle classes alike. Hungary, in sentiment, and largely in fact, is feudal. Territorial magnates are accepted as an expression of the will of God, and labourers toil for them at an incredibly minute sum in the same spirit.

The monarchist ideal is regarded as the final expression of feudalism. The people not only believe in its principle, but desire its active expression. There is no escaping the impact of popular sentiment, and wherever I went, I found the same enthusiasm for the throne. The principle of kingship, however, is vested not in an individual ruler, but in the sacred crown, which was given by the Pope in the year A.D. 1000 to the first King of Hungary, Stephen the Saint. The Crown, which still retains its pristine splendour, was preserved

intact during the Turkish Occupation, 1526-1686, and is at present in safe keeping at the Royal Palace, amid glittering solitude. Only once in his Royal career does the reigning sovereign of Hungary wear this imposing emblem. It is placed upon his head during the Coronation to be removed immediately after the ceremony and taken back to its shrine. Its last public appearance was at the fugitive accession of Charles IV, the Hapsburg representative from 1916 to 1918. Meanwhile, in default of a crowned head, national sentiment is deflected to the Regent, Admiral Horty, the conquering hero who, in 1919, rode into Budapest at the head of his troops and ejected Bela Kun with the Roumanians, who were supposedly maintaining order.

The Regent's personality and life express the trends that animate the Magyar ethos—territorial splendour and individual simplicity. He rules in Budapest in appropriate magnificence, but in his native village he farms his lands, hunts and shoots and rides, after the national custom. He is a member of the local council, and takes his seat by the labourers on his estate, with whom he votes. The combination of the two roles suits the people perfectly.

Nevertheless, the monarchist ideal remains supreme and the Hungarians, at one with the Austrian aristocrats in desiring the return of the Hapsburgs, would welcome reunion with Austria under a dual monarchy. It is not the somewhat enfeebled personality of the Pretender, Archduke Otto, that attracts them, but the tradition of his house. The reason for this strange enthusiasm seems to lie in the legend of the Empress—or, as she is known in Hungary—the late Queen Elizabeth. Her beauty, bravery and unfailing champion-ship of the people, even against the King Emperor Franz Josef, has passed into history. She is

regarded with the worship and affection of a saint.

There is a museum in Budapest where every possible memento of her reign as a Queen, and her life as an individual, is displayed. All day long people of all classes crowd in to examine the relics with intense interest and solicitude. I watched amazedly a long line of workmen, clerks, the well-to-do and the indigent linger before the cases containing the national dresses she wore at various provincial fêtes, her riding habits, gloves, veils and hats. Some of the exhibits are worn, almost shabby, others are the merest trifles, an artificial flower, a handkerchief, a prayer book. But they are regarded as infinitely precious. The nation has even acquired the dress the poor lady had on when she was assassinated at Genoa. The grammar from which she studied Hungarian is greatly prized. The walls are hung with her portraits at every stage of her history.

The difference between the Austrian attitude and the Hungarian is amazing. The Empress and the Emperor have passed out of the mind of their country ; except for the legitimists, it is as though they never have been. But to the Magyars, Queen Elizabeth remains the personification of high patriotism and romance ; and Franz Josef, as her husband, is still respected.

The desolate little lodge at Ischl is in poignant contrast to the shrine at Budapest.

I was told many stories of the Queen's devotion to the people. She learned to speak Hungarian in a year. An incredibly difficult language—its origins, like the Magyar racial roots, are Finnish—she mastered the tongue completely, and always used it when she visited the country. It was part of the settlement, following the War of Independence, that the Emperor and Empress of Austria should be crowned King and Queen of Hungary,



‘GLORIOUS EMBROIDERIES’

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and, on the occasion of the ceremony, the nation made her a gift of money. She used it all on behalf of the men who had been wounded or impoverished in the Revolution.

In spite of this feudal sentiment, however, Hungary is governed by a Constitutional Parliament, with two legislative chambers. The House of Commons is duly elected, either by ballot or acclamation by hands, while the other house is composed of hereditary nobles and delegates of aristocratic, scientific, literary and legal bodies.

The lower house has 240, the upper 250 members, and the hereditary classes can veto any Bill that smacks too much of democracy. Having passed both houses, a measure needs the assent of the Regent on behalf of the Crown.

The majority of M.P.'s in both houses are Government, i.e., Regent's men, who stand for the *status quo*. A progressive handful demand a break-up of the vast properties which remain under individual ownership, but the programme is not likely to be effective unless a succession of bad harvests precipitates widespread discontent. In this event Socialist propaganda—there are still Marxist groups in Budapest—might gain an impetus, which, at present, it does not show.

The majority of Hungary's nine million population are on the land, and of these a considerable percentage remain agricultural labourers. Since the War, however, under the Land Reform Act, the Government have settled 400,000 ex-soldiers, widows, etc., on allotments. Co-operative dairy farms and vineyards have been established, and appear to be flourishing.

Political opinion is not penalised. Indeed, under existing conditions individual liberty remains unhampered. The Press is uncensored, religious freedom is established, and local bodies play a considerable part in State administration.

There is compulsory education from the age of six, and though voluntary as well as State primary schools exist, they are all under Government supervision. There is a free medical service for the poor, and the children of the unemployed are given at least one good meal a day.

The position of woman in this feudal quasi-modern State is interesting. The law gives her equal opportunity with man in the professions, etc., but custom keeps her in the more sheltered ways of life. She is regarded as politically inferior, however, except in certain restricted cases. A man may vote at the age of twenty-four. A female cannot vote until she be thirty, and then only if she has lived in the same constituency for two years and has graduated from the highest class in the local primary school, or holds an educational certificate of equal merit. On the other hand, "ladies" who possess private means need only graduate from the fourth class. Mothers of thirty with three legitimate children may vote without a degree; meanwhile, unmarried female graduates can claim the right of suffrage from twenty years of age.

Women and children in industry are protected by special legislation. A woman may not work for six weeks after child-birth and employers are forbidden to discharge her for this enforced absence. On the other hand, she receives neither wages nor State allowance for the period; her needs are left to private charity. Children under twelve may not work in factories, or be employed on nightwork. There is also a law providing that all young people must have eleven hours' "rest" out of every twenty-four. The suggestion that the remaining thirteen may be devoted to the interests of the employer is, to say the least of it, a little feudal.

Homeless and destitute women are kindly and considerately catered for in municipal lodging houses and shelters. Some of the inmates are

utterly derelict, others earn a little by daily cleaning, street selling, etc., but the amount is too small to provide a home. They can, however, carry on with a hope of a free bed and municipal meals. I went over many of these places, crowded by married women with babies, girls who had lost their homes, young, old, the hopeless and the wrecked. The women are not subjected to harsh or prying questions on admission. They give their name, employment—if any—and their general circumstances. They go out during the day—except the more infirm—but at nightfall they come back to an airy dormitory, a comfortable sitting-room, and, more than all else, a friendly smile and welcoming kindness.

In summer, even the most desolate of heart can find some solace in the beauties of the city, the gracious parks, bathing pools, the wide Andrassy Boulevard, with its brilliant shops and modern buildings, in such breathless contrast to the century-old places, which, behind high walls and formidable gates, suggest an Eastern seclusion. Here reigns a tranquillity born of time. Like ancient trees, the house roots seemed welded to the earth. Here, one feels, grand viziers of the Ottoman Empire held their Court—a Court of which these backwaters remain the only trace. The results of the Turkish domination, which lasted for nearly two centuries, are merely external. Here and there you find traces of Moorish decoration, but the life of the people, Christian in outlook, and European in habit, has engulfed any suggestion of Mohammedan custom of thought; that aspect of the desert, which repeats itself in the Magyar race, comes from an age more stark and more ascetic.

Always in the oldest as in the youngest quarter of Budapest you carry the consciousness of the river with which the fortune of the capital is inextricably bound. Vienna, linked in the popular

imagination with the Blue Danube is, in reality, some distance from its banks. Budapest, on the contrary, cannot be divorced from its beauty and its sovereignty. On the wooded height of Gellert, with trailing vines, fragrant shrubs and virginal greensward, you gaze down on the untroubled spaces of the vast waterway. At the hill-top stands the statue of St. Gellert ; his arm outstretched in blessing seems to unite the Earth and the waters under the Earth. St. Gellert—I was told the tale a hundred times—was tutor to the son of King Stephen, the Saint. He met a martyr's fate a thousand years ago, but to the people he is still a living part of their city, linked up with the Sacred Crown and St. Stephen's hand, the most precious relic of this Catholic country. The relic, kept on the altar of the castle chapel, is enclosed in a golden casket, chastely wrought in a fine design. The saintly hand, which, it is claimed, has miraculous powers, is little more than dust, but, even so, is potent to stir at once the national and religious sentiment of the whole country. On August 20th, St. Stephen's Day, the casket is borne aloft in a magnificent ceremonial. The Catholic hierarchy, in full canonicals, with swinging censers and singing choristers, set out in procession from the chapel to its parent church. With them are the Hungarian nobility in all their traditional magnificence of dress. The people follow, with bands playing, soldiers marching, all the pomp and panoply of a ritual which expresses love of country, rooted in love of God.

Catholicism is engrained in the Magyar consciousness. Austria is devoutly of the Church, but to her religion is apart from nationalism. Not so with Hungary ; her whole history from the first beginnings of culture is entwined with her faith. King Stephen—the Saint—expresses the twin loyalties. The Church is represented at every

festival or ceremonial, whether of the village or the city. At the opening of Parliament, when the nobility assume their hereditary trappings, bishops and archbishops are also there. In the tiniest hamlet, when the country-folk for miles around gather together for a dance, the parish priest blesses the proceedings.

Budapest is full of Baroque Churches and old palaces. She preserves with pride mementoes of past ages, the rudimentary craftsmanship of centuries back, the ancient ceremonial dress of her nobles, the gala garments of her peasantry. In essentials, both of these remain unchanged to this very day. Though less cumbrous they are equally ornate.

Here, again, there is a striking difference between the customs of Austria and Hungary. It is only the people of the Tirol and the Alpine districts who wear traditional dress. But the Magyars, noble and simple alike, put on with pride the garments of their race. It is the national obeisance to feudalism.

Budapest has a thousand enchantments, but for all its vitality, interest and adventure, the shadow of the unwanted, condemned to a life of effortless penury, lies athwart the city, and it was with aching relief that I went into the country districts where the stress and strain of life is curiously softened.

I saw my first Hungarian village under the friendly care of a charming woman familiar with the actual living conditions of the peasants, and an intimate knowledge of their arts and crafts. We motored from the capital on a blazing afternoon, through dusty suburbs with up-to-date houses, until, suddenly, all traces of town life seemed to disappear. We were on a long, white highway that stretched far into the distance. Now and again small hamlets came into view, with

thickly cultivated fields and herds of cattle, but our first halt was at a picturesque place with a long straggling street of whitewashed houses. We stopped at a two-storied dwelling with a charming little garden opening on fields of vegetables and rye. Flowers bloomed on either side of the pathway, and the neat green gate reminded me of England.

"I know the woman of the house," said my friend. "We will go and see her."

There was nothing English about the house itself. The door was painted decoratively and boldly in a design of reds, blues, and golds, oriental in colour and pattern; above the lintel the same pattern was repeated. A fine woman of about forty answered our knock and smilingly asked us to come in. She was wearing a very lovely blouse exquisitely embroidered in silk, with apron to match. A bright red handkerchief was round her dark hair and a silver necklace clasped her full, shapely throat. She was a magnificent specimen with a regal pride of bearing. The sitting-room was spacious and fairly lofty, the walls of a bright blue were painted with a decorative frieze, and a huge, beautifully made wooden chest, was gaily coloured with a hunting scene on the centre of the lid. Bright hues and superb workmanship were everywhere. I wondered if the master of the house were an artist or a decorator.

"She has done it all," said my friend, motioning to the hostess. "Our peasant women all decorate their own cottages and keep them whitewashed and weather-proof without any help from son or husband. They do not consider it is a man's job." Here again, it seemed to me, was a desert tradition, when man hunted for food, and woman looked after the camp. The house was well kept and well furnished. Old carved chairs, an ancestral

oak table, with a comfortable cooking-stove and great copper pots filled the room. But I had not seen all; with a burst of pride I was shown the special treasure which is the joy of every village housewife the country through.

From the sitting-room we were taken to the best bedroom; but I had not time to admire the rest of the furnishings—my eyes were held by the bed. A fine old oak frame surmounted by a good mattress, it was piled right up to the ceiling with feather pillows of unimaginable softness. The German *haus-frau* has her pillow pride, but it is as nothing to the swelling of the Hungarian female breast at the contemplation of her downy fortune. I counted two piles of four-and-twenty pillows, each and every one encased in the finest linen decorated with drawn-threadwork, exquisite embroidery—the most delicate stitchery in the world.

“But,” I asked, awestricken, “where do all the pillows go at night? Do they sleep under them?”

My friend laughed. “They don’t sleep here at all. They use a room upstairs. Quite clean, but without any pillows or special furniture. . . . We don’t ask to see the room,” she added.

Indeed, there was more than enough to admire at the moment. Chests of drawers, marvellously carved; hunting flasks, encased in leather of rose and green, elaborately patterned, hand-made carpets of the same soft shades; blankets of home-made wool, dyed in reds and yellows—the whole, paraphernalia of peasant culture. This was not an exceptional home. All through the village we found household treasures as delightful, some with less—a few with even more—pillows than the first.

It was at a cottage painted in arresting greens and golds that I saw the *chef-d’œuvre* of village art—a young girl’s wedding trousseau. So soon as she can hold a needle, an Hungarian

maiden learns the art of embroidery. By the time she is thirteen or fourteen, she is not only expected to start her trousseau, but has probably already achieved a number of dresses for her married life. One by one, the precious objects are deposited in a deep chest, not to be touched until the great day arrives. This particular bride was exceptionally lucky ; not only was she a star turn in the matter of embroidery, but her mother and her grandmother, famous for their needlecraft throughout the district, had lavished all their skill on her wardrobe. Drawer after drawer was emptied ; white silk frocks heavy with blues and reds ; black silk, with traceries of green and pink, and a delicious border of daisies ; *voiles* for less sumptuous occasions, and bunches of blouses that made my eyes widen with envy.

Then there were festival gowns, amazing head-dresses ; shawls worked in such a delicate fashion that I marvelled why the wonderful old lady who had evolved such masterpieces had not lost her sight. But her eyes remained intact and smiled at us from behind gold-rimmed glasses.

Nothing would satisfy grandmother but that we should try on some of these lovely garments. At least a dozen petticoats, heavily starched, were required as foundation, with a remarkable and painful kind of steel-belt. The weight of the whole was prodigious ; I felt a new admiration for peasant strength and endurance.

The daughter did not look robust. She was slender, with smooth dark hair, and a smooth white skin. She carried a heavy silk gown, however, with its massive foundation, as though the whole thing were a feather-weight.

The village was a prosperous one, most of the peasants having their own plot of land, the produce of which was marketed at the nearest town. The women, old and young, were centred in their

homes, family treasures and possessions, to which they continually added. The people work hard, but there are occasional relaxations when the whole population turns out *en masse*. Hundreds were expected at the girl's wedding the following week, some of the guests journeying from distant districts. Everyone goes to a wedding in Hungary, and gifts are many and various. The entire neighbourhood feasts, dances, and is made welcome. I was assured the entire village would go *en fête*. The women would wear their most glorious embroideries, and the men's garments would match.

Alas! village art has already been exploited. Capitalism has roped in thousands of peasant girls who, at a starvation wage, embroider for the world's markets. The patterns originally used were the outcome of individual pride and skill. Now, however, these patterns are transferred by the hundred, and are only coarsely worked. Presently the factory owners will mechanise the whole production, and the one-time artists will become mere machine-minders, turning out mass products.

On the outskirts of the village we passed a well with the traditional arrangement of pole and bucket. These wells are the main source of domestic water supply in the rural districts. Picturesque and cool in the summer, they do not look so inviting in the long winter with its tearing winds and icy cold. Indeed, the villages, to my mind, are essentially seasonal in their attraction. Some of the outlying homesteads must be terribly lonesome in the snow—I felt the chill of isolation physical and mental in imagination. We drove along a dusty road for miles without a sign of habitation, finally reaching a village, not so neat as the first, but with the same scheme of decoration. All its cottages were two-story, the inside

walls painted and the lintels of the doors bordered with cleverly executed designs. The gardens were gay with flowers, the fields well stocked, and savoury meats were cooking in the kitchens.

On our way we met a group of young men on horseback, *en route* for a wedding in the neighbourhood. Feathers in their hats with lavishly decorated jackets—splendid riders on splendid mounts—they were a dashing cavalcade. Horses, indeed, are one of the chief features in the landscape. They still remain the pride of the country and are bred in the vast cattle ranches, where Hungarian cowboys outdo their American rivals in feats of strength and skill. On those long, undulating plains, with their vast herds of cattle, life is simple and adventurous. Long hours of labour under a fierce sun are relieved by an evening gallop to a village fête, where the national Czardas is danced for hours and hours, till an unseasoned onlooker turns giddy, and gypsy orchestras grow wild and wilder.

The gypsies are privileged people even to-day. Some of them have settled down, comparatively speaking, on small holdings, where they sporadically till the soil. In the intervals of agricultural effort, however, they go hunting and fishing, tramping miles over the mountains. It is said that the younger generation is growing less migratory, and remains settled for longer periods. There is still, however, the same shifting population of singing vagabonds who sing and play the heart out of the hardest, winning money from the stingiest purse. Towards the evening we passed a Tzigane encampment, with the usual dogs, the wood-pile, the savoury pot—hall-marks of the tribe the world over. In Hungary, however, it is not necessary for a Tzigane to rob the local hen-roosts. The people are as ready to pay as he is to sing for his supper.

For all their nomad inclinations, however, the gypsies are irrevocably Catholic, in belief, if not in observance. In them also is that kinship with the wild that the tent-dwellers brought with them years before Stephen the Saint was heard of. And yet the ancient privileges granted by Rome to Hungary a thousand years ago still bear the same significance. The initial association between the King and the Pope carries until this day certain privileges. Thus the wearer of the Sacred Crown has the right to veto the nomination of any particular candidate for St. Peter's chair. This right was exercised by the Emperor Franz Josef who, as King of Hungary, challenged a certain Cardinal who had contested the burial of the Crown Prince with Catholic ceremonial.

It is perhaps their inalienable pride which enables the Hungarians as a whole to bear their territorial truncation so unflinchingly. Ringed round by antagonists who fence her in with fantastic tariffs which debar her from an economic exchange of commodities, and cut her off from supplies of steel and even salt, I found no trace of defeatism in the people. There is none of that sense of inferiority which drives the Germans to unbelievable braggadocio, and tempts the Austrians to self-destruction. The nation believes, with an intensity of will purpose which before now has removed mountains of resistance, that a rectification of the frontiers will take place. Meanwhile the desires and the prayers of their compatriots, exiled and dispossessed in Czecho-Slovakia, Jugo-Slavia, and Roumania, are joined in a hunger for the Motherland that bridges distance and time.

A small stately country, her ancient roots strong and fertile, Hungary remains an oasis of national unity in a conflicting struggle of divergent factions—the stable centre of a European maelstrom.

CHAPTER IX

Jugo-Slavia—Old Despotisms and Modern Tyrannies

THE more I see of post-war Europe, the stronger grows my conviction of the innate brotherhood of man! With every temptation to fly at each other's throats, the people of those countries that President Wilson and Mr. Lloyd George dissected have managed for sixteen years to keep the peace. Triangular pieces of land with their complement of human flesh and blood were carved by these old gentlemen out of one living organism and arbitrarily transferred to another, without the least sense of homogeneity or cohesion. Very often the complications, territorial and linguistic, which they were called upon to solve could have been settled by the creation of a free town—as in the case of Danzig. Such an arrangement, however, would have entailed a careful survey of the region, an understanding of local difficulties and complexities, proceedings so alien to the methods of professional politicians that it was not even considered by these amateur anatomists. As a consequence the jumble of customs, passports, currency, etc., at these *foci* of dissension are matters of daily, indeed hourly exacerbation, not only to the nationals but to the casual visitor.

This is particularly the case on the Fiume-Susak frontier line between Italy and Jugo-Slavia. The two towns are one geographically and topographically speaking. But Versailles decided that the place should be divided, the point of

demarcation being the centre of the bridge over the River Rijeka. To go from one side of the city to the other it is necessary to procure two *visas*—Italian and Jugo-Slav, otherwise, having passed to the Italian territory of Fiume, you may be denied re-entry into Jugo-Slavian Susak, or vice versa. If you carry luggage, even the smallest parcel, it must pass the customs on both sides of the bridge, and the question of money, what you may bring in or take out, is so involved that after a few journeys over the river, the strongest nature weakens and remains rooted to one side or the other. Minor altercations are continual. Excitable Italians shout at emotional Jugo-Slavs, and both nationalities fall with venom on the wretched traveller, who, having done a little shopping in one alien territory, desires to go back to the other.

My experience of this battledore and shuttlecock business came at an unhappy moment. I was going for a cruise in the Adriatic accompanied by my young friend Bunny, my fellow traveller on an expedition to Russia and the Far East. We were to join our ship *Kraljica Marija* at Susak, and from there sail along the Dalmatian coast to some of the Greek Islands. We had dawdled through Italy, calling on the way at Genoa, Florence and Venice, and so on to Trieste. This melancholy graveyard of a city that Mussolini has opened to Austrian shipping is completely derelict. It has no trade, no industry, and is simply a jumping-off ground for those *en route* for Italian beauty spots. This being so, it follows that while the national train service is excellent, every possible obstacle is put in the way of your entering the neighbouring country. To go from Trieste to Susak by rail means hours of weary travel—slow trains and continual changes—thus teaching the voyager not to seek for pastures new. It was with difficulty that we even induced the station

authorities to take in our baggage for the night—it was labelled Jugo-Slavia !

This luggage question is eternally baffling, the minimum or maximum charge for transport differing in every country. In China you pay so much per package, whether it be a revelation trunk or an attaché case. In Italy nothing is charged for that can be packed into a passenger coach. As a consequence, suitcases festoon the racks, pile up the floors, rain on your head, entwine about your feet, until, indeed, you feel that human freight in the compartment is really only baggage attachment. Not knowing this peculiarity, we had taken a small suitcase and cabin trunk apiece, for which we had to pay prodigious sums. The luggage van on the Italian railways is regarded with peculiar veneration, and admission to its shelter is charged for at staggering rates.

Having wrestled with rapacious porters at Trieste, we sought out a lodging for the night, but in this barren city the hotels are as bad as anything our English provinces can show—I can think of no more discouraging comparison. We had a wearisome time looking for human accommodation, but at last we secured an uncomfortable room and some ill-cooked food, and were able to turn our attention to the problem of reaching Susak by road. Intensive questioning revealed that there was a motor service which performed the journey in four hours. To be on board the boat in time we should have to catch the nine o'clock coach, which would take us half the way, another line completing the journey. There was, the hall porter told us, no occasion to book seats, there would be plenty of room. He indicated that the people who could possibly desire to leave Trieste for Jugo-Slavia were so few as to be negligible. We listened in relief, and next morning, arriving at the depôt with trunks complete, learnt that every seat had

been taken, and that the next coach did not leave till the afternoon, by which time the *Kraljica Marija* would have sailed. The one and only train had also departed, and to hire a motor-car would not only have taken every penny of our ready cash, but the beastly thing might possibly have broken down on the road.

It was then that something of the national doggedness still attributed to the English character came uppermost in Bunny and in me. We felt that if we did not leave Trieste immediately, it might close in on us, and keep us prisoners. A few judicious lira extracted the information from the depôt that there was another motor line, but the coaches only ran at irregular intervals—sometimes missing whole days ! Grasping at a straw of hope, however, we hailed a taxi, and luggage and all set out for the office. A coach was about to start in fifteen minutes and we gratefully booked seats. At the end of half an hour a broken-down, dilapidated vehicle arrived, a cross between a trolley and a motor-bus. Narrow in the body, low in the roof, it was constructed for the maximum of discomfort, and springs it had none. The driver, however, had a soul above these drawbacks, and so soon as we were out of the town, he opened out, and with a blood-curdling whoop, started at breakneck speed up a road that, winding continually, was very stony, and in some places full of holes. The bus swayed ; we bounded, were flung forward, tipped back, clinging for sheer life to the window frames and seats, all but lying on the floor. My poor little friend turned green and yellow. An old man, with a vast packing-case, was sick, and three children, seated at the back, cried unceasingly. I felt as if every tooth in my head were being continuously extracted, and Bunny gradually changed from yellow to pale puce. Between spasms of agony, however, I realised we

were passing through magnificent mountain gorges, valleys, high hills, wooded with sentinels of green, and here and there miraculous glimpses of the Adriatic.

We endured the drive for two hours and a half, when we were shot out on the wayside to wait for the coach that would take us on to Susak. We sat on our trunks and tried to recover our balance, while we took a look round. We were evidently on the outskirts of a small seaside town, blue waves and yellow sands shimmered in the distance, and presently, in solemn procession, a large fat man with two even larger women, all in bathing-dress, came into sight. Their costumes were amazing. Violently *décolletée* at both ends, their pink figures suggested large prawns in very little aspic. They waddled gravely down the road, disappearing, at last, into a big white house. We felt we must be nearing the Jugo-Slavian frontiers! In Italy, nationals of any age clad themselves with almost Victorian reticence for the beach. Young girls are severely censored—they may not enter a church, let alone the sea, unless their arms be covered—and their parents and guardians follow suit. Jugo-Slavia, however, has an almost pagan joy of the body. Magnificent swimmers, the young people dash into the sea wearing little more than fig-leaves. Unfortunately, the older and usually fatter generation fig-leaf also, with distressing sartorial results. Our large friends were the vanguard of an army equally unclad. The bathing pools and *plages* on the Dalmatian coast abound with almost naked human porpoises.

The coach, it really was a coach this time, turned up an inch thick with dust inside and out. We were past caring, however, and, bruised in every limb, crawled thankfully to our seats. Mercifully, however, the roads were better and the driver less enthusiastic, so that the passage was



"A DASHING CAVALCADE"

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not quite so rough. It left much to be desired, however, indeed the whole journey was an amazing commentary on post-war conditions. The envy, malice, hatred and uncharitableness precipitated by the Peace has urged such animosity between Italy and her neighbour that neither country will co-operate in any scheme for effective transport to the other. Hence, you may choose between long-drawn hours in a train at a snail's pace, or disconcerting rushes in an out-of-date vehicle, with agonies reminiscent of the rack.

The coach stopped some distance from the frontier, which meant that we had to charter a Fiume cab to the Italian Customs, and get another on the Susak side to drive us into Jugo-Slavia. We gathered that, all things considered, an Italian driver serves his interests best if he stays on the national side of the bridge. It is neither cheap nor diplomatic to obtain a permit to cross the barrier. Proceedings were not too long at the Italian Customs, though they delved pretty thoroughly into our trunks, for fear, perhaps, that we were concealing a valuable painting or marble masterpiece. At a few hundred feet distance, the same performance was gone through a second time. At last, however, we were released, and made for the quay. We had not yet changed our money into dinar, but despite his patriotic enthusiasm the driver consented to accept his fare in lira, though he charged a stiff price for doing so. We almost fell into a boat, and indescribably dusty and dishevelled were rowed out to the *Kraljica* just in time to hear her final warning hoot.

Successful pleasure cruisers, I always feel, are born not made. There are periods on an ordinary voyage when one may find a little breathing space from the intensive good-fellowship bred of enforced proximity and organised entertainment ; rarely, if ever, can you escape from the daily round

of " enjoyment " that to so many constitutes the chief attraction of a cruise. A joy trip seems to attract hundreds of the same type, and while, on a big sea-going ship you will find people as varied in their tastes and outlook as those you meet in omnibuses or tubes, on a holiday steamer you encounter a disconcerting standardisation, mental and social. The *Kraljica Marija*, however, had a cosmopolitan passenger list, French, Greek, Czech, German, Austrian and Dutch, with a sprinkling of British. Most of the crowd were out quite frankly and delightfully to enjoy the summer weather, the deck games, and the sun-bathing. Our compatriots, however, for the most part were more seriously minded. Pleasure, to many of the English, still remains a synonym for sin, and to escape any imputation of guilt they will give a weighty reason for the most frivolous acts. Some of the group described their keenness to root out the beginnings of civilisation in the ancient cities of Dalmatia, others yearned to dig up Hellenic remains ; no one seemed to care very much as to present-day conditions of either Greeks or Jugos. Meanwhile the food was excellent, the service good ; we all put on glad rags for dancing on the promenade deck of an evening, and behaved generally as though we were at an expensive hotel in a European capital, instead of on the open sea under a starlight sky, in the loveliest and most romantic scenery possible.

Flowering shrubs, sweet-smelling plants grew right to the water's edge. Dark brown hills broke into the leafy green of young vineyards ; fantastically modern buildings stood cheek by jowl with Moorish-looking houses ; Eastern markets, lit by electricity, were crowded with women in shawls and long black gowns, carrying great baskets on their heads, and obviously contemptuous of the bobbed hair of a young girl across the street. A

Turk, wearing a fez, would jostle a Greek ; a dark-skinned Slav sneer at a fair-haired Croat.

I had my first contact with this conglomeration of races, customs, primitive barbarisms and ancient arts at Split. A schoolboy, asked the meaning of the term Jugo-Slav, is reported to have answered that it was the feminine of Czecho-Slovak. The definition is as explanatory as any other of the present synonym for Serbia, Montenegro, with bits of Hungary and fragments of Austria thrown in. It is hard to believe that the name can inspire these various peoples with national pride. Between them lie generations of hostility in ideas and religion, and though the present system of government unites them all in equality of oppression, it is difficult to find a single animating force.

At Split, as at other ports of call, a vast excursion was arranged, under the ægis of Putnik, the equivalent of our "Cook's." The young man in charge spoke seven languages, had an exhaustive knowledge of all kinds of transport and could reel off entire guide books at a moment's notice. He swept up a couple of hundred passengers in a twinkling, and armed with a megaphone, led forth the cavalcade in every kind and age of car. Bunny and I, however, were not of the party. Potted Split à la Putnik did not appeal to us, and we should have gone off on our own but for a piece of happy fortune. The ship's personnel included a wireless officer who spoke fluent English and knew the city like the palm of his hand. Bunny, who always bends an enquiring mind on any kind of gadget, had already been given a lesson in wave-lengths and suggested that the officer would be delighted to show us round.

Michael, as he was called, was an interesting post-war product. Born at Sarajevo, he had the intense clannishness of a mountaineer, together

with the adventurous spirit of sea-going folk. At twenty-seven years of age he had been half over the world as a sailor, had put in a considerable time in the States, where he qualified as wireless operator, and, returning to Jugo-Slavia for military service, had settled temporarily on the *Kraljica*.

He had seen too much of life, had struggled too intently to retain a narrow racial outlook. He visualised with other ardent spirits a future in which the various contending elements of his country should be merged into a national cohesive whole, while retaining distinctive local differentiations. As yet, however, Jugo-Slav youth does not realise that the road to this particular goal is by way of better economic distribution. Feudalism and industrialism have the people in their grip. The extremes of luxury and abject poverty lie as close as the fingers of the same hand.

But if Collectivism has still to influence the young minds of this Slav-Croat-Latin-Turkish *mélange*, they are accutely resistant to the Fascism which at present prevails ; Parliament is still suspended ; the Press remains censored ; the Army rules. The hand of the Regent Prince is no lighter than that of the dead King.

Split is the incarnation of the varying types of civilisation which have moulded Dalmatia from its first beginnings. The city, set on a hill, flows down to the waterside, where, in the harbour, ride the proud ships of nations that, hundreds of years ago, put into that same port. She sprang to life in the far-off past, during the Diocletian era, dating back to A.D. 350 and her origins are written in the classic pillars of the old Greek palace. The lovely ruins still preserve which non-human serenity, etherealised aloofness that stamp the architecture of the most classic civilisation the world has known. Elsewhere in the city there is no touch of the glory that was Greece, but there are

marked traces of the Turkish, Latin and Slav influences that have played so large a part in her destiny.

From the Greek palace Michael took us to that masterpiece of imagery and strength, the statue of Bishop Gregor, by the Serbian sculptor, Mestrovic. In a huge court-yard, carved in stone, stands the immediate memorial of the great Slav Christian, who, centuries ago, inaugurated the ritual use of that Cyrillic text, which later spread to ancient Russia and is retained by her to this day.

The huge statue stands with uplifted hand facing the East, from which Gregor insisted the Slav ethos must draw strength and inspiration rather than from the West. Sublime in deathless arrogance, the genius of Mestrovic has set in stone his far-flung challenge of supremacy.

"Mestrovic is a Serb," said Michael, "as I am. . . . We are a part of the great Slav people."

From Gregor we went through mean streets, redeemed by Moorish arches, long broken flights of steps, on which olive-skinned men, wearing the Turkish fez, sat lazily, occasionally prodding a tethered goat. Now and again the ruins of a spacious villa, Italian in art and origin, brought a sense of lost beauty, dying loveliness. But, in the midst of decay, the Lion of St. Mark, emblazoned on a crumbling wall, a tottering gateway, proclaimed the sovereignty of Venice. A soft-eyed fisher lad and his young brother passed us. They might have stepped from a canvas of Murillo, in utter contrast to our keen-faced Serbian friend.

From the culture of the West we turned to the customs of the East. Michael led us through a busy market thronged with customers. Women sat at their stalls, untidily piled with vegetables, grapes, melons, chunks of raw meat, rice and fruit. Chickens, also on sale, with ducks and geese, were

flung squawking on the ground, their legs tied together, in a heterogeneous bundle. The sun blazed upon the poor creatures' heads, the dust was thick upon them and they were nearly dead for lack of water. Nobody seemed to worry as to their condition; I don't suppose it was even observed. The passers-by were as indifferent to the torment of the wretched birds as to the flies gathering in crowds on the melon and the chunks of meat. The women in blackshawls stood curiously still and silent—or squatted motionless on the ground; the whole conditions were hopelessly dirty and insanitary, inexpressibly squalid. All the same, the children running about barefooted and half-clad were amazingly healthy and riotously cheerful, not a peevish baby or a discontented face amongst them. Whether they are equally joyous and fit in the winter months I cannot say; the housing conditions, as I found out later, are abominable.

By this time the sun was at its fiercest, and Michael suggested we should visit a Kava, where long, cooling draughts of wine can be bought for a few pence. The vintage of the country is delicious, but, alas, it will not travel, and has to be consumed at home rather than abroad, for which reason even the poorest peasant, the most sweated worker, can afford himself an occasional glass, while the goatherds carry their liquor with them in a gourd-shaped vessel of hide.

The Kava was not built on modern lines, but remained true to tradition. The cask from which the vintner drew great flagons stood on trestles, the guests were served at low tables, where they sat and smoked and talked.

"Some of them stay here and drink till the sun sets," said Michael. "They discuss many things, but never politics. That would not be safe in a wine-shop."

The little place grew very full. Modern persons in lounge suits, peasants in leather breeches and jackets, farmers and clerks, officials and Bohemians, all were there bound together by love of the grape. Split has other and more up-to-date refreshment places, cocktail bars, run on American lines, restaurants replete with Western cooking and convenience. We passed a bunch of ships' people pouring into a Western café. Putnik, we realised, served the hotel-keepers well.

The new part of Split, with its white-walled villas, bathing pools and cinemas, modern shops and sanitation is quite divorced from the ancient and evil-smelling city. The gulf between Dives and Lazarus is wide and deep. The chief pride of up-to-date Split is the great park with its wide promenade that, rising from sea-level, stretches to the hill-top. It was already dusk when we commenced the ascent. Beneath us was the bay, ashine with the lights of snug-lying ships ; about us was the mystery of close-growing trees, and overhead a gradually lengthening chain of lamps linked one hill-top to another. The path ended in a wide plateau ; through the evening air came the sirens of passing steamers, with an occasional harsher, almost animal note. " Those are the monkeys," said Michael. " There is a royal collection here of beasts and birds."

It only needed this fantastic touch to complete the picture of this city of warring elements, irreconcilable cults. We walked down the hill out of the park, back to sinister courts, foul-smelling streets. The darkness brought a scent of danger. It was as though ancient hates and lusts had been let loose and were seeking what they could devour.

Dubrovnik, our next stopping-place, is steeped in legend, and active with tourist life. Its first beginnings were Latin, springing from a group of fishermen who called the place Ragusa, by which

name the world still knows it. It is said that the great Argosies were called after the city, and that Ulysees might well have brought his *Argo* to anchor there. Ancient towers and gates enclose the market square, fringed with tiny low-roofed shops that run back from the street into the living quarters of the household. Jewellers and silk merchants, Jews and Turks, Greeks and Latin, chaffer with cosmopolitan customers over silver bracelets, jewelled clasps, curiously carved pipes and coloured shawls. Ancient crones and ageless men sit on the roadside, silently begging alms, and in the evening the whole place is lit up with electric light.

Italian influence shows itself in the national type—graceful figures, mobile faces, in contradistinction to the square-set bodies of the Serbs. Here, also, jealousy and fear of Mussolini centres. That the Dictator has designs on the Adriatic is firmly believed, and every Italian warship is credited with espionage as to plans of shore defence. In Dubrovnik, however, there is a livelier sense of politics, due, perhaps, to the infusion of Latin blood, and small revolutionary groups of the intelligensia discuss the possibilities of economic revolution. Their propaganda, however, has little influence among the peasants or the proletariat. In Belgrade and Zagreb, however, where the Communist Students Party is gaining ground, I understand the workers are beginning to come in.

The centre of Dubrovnik, intensely overcrowded, teems with humanity. Factory workers slave for a few pence a day, women bear children in foul hovels on heaps of rags. On the outskirts of the city are bathing pools and clubs, spacious and delightful. Here, however, the poor never come ; nor would they be admitted if they did. The iron hand of caste rules firmly. Oriental custom keeps

class from class. The general run of the intelligensia, like the workers, have a restricted outlook. Salaries are small, both in private offices and Government service, and without graft, hope of promotion is small. Racial animosities occasionally flare up, but the climate, the natural beauties of the province, the facilities for every kind of water sport, soften human asperities. Of an evening hundreds of boys and girl, young men and maidens, make for the sea, and swim with effortless ease and vigour half through the night.

Jugo-Slavian girls are encouraged to be athletic, permitted to play games and, generally, to be comradely with men. They are not, however, permitted to enter the professions, and their employment in business is restricted to ill-paid and subordinate jobs. Superb physical specimens, the monied, middle-class young women of to-day can hold their own with any nation in health and beauty. Frank, ingenuous, and very charming, fundamentally they are the most classic snobs the world has known.

"Do you really earn your own living?" queried the daughter of a wealthy manufacturer.

"But how dreadful!"

"Why?" I asked.

"It must be horrible to be obliged to work," was the reply. "In our country women just look after the house and enjoy themselves."

"And if they have no house and no money?"

"Oh, you mean the poor. They are awfully lazy, you know, and terribly discontented."

Something of the harem lingered in that young woman's blood. Kismet, it was the will of Allah—albeit a Christian God—that she should enjoy the wealth others created.

Snobbery is not confined to the feminine gender. It seems to have affected most of the State Services—even the Jugo-Slavian Mercantile Marine.

I learnt that the shipping department requires an officer to perfect himself in social graces—dancing, tennis, bridge, light conversation, and all the arts of polite society before he can hope for a Master's certificate. Mere knowledge of navigation and practical experience do not count.

"My son hoped to get a ship this year," a fine old sea-dog of a captain, who had served in the Austrian Navy, said to me. "He's a good lad with seven years' experience, but I am afraid he won't get his ticket. You see, he can't tango."

Nature, luxuriant on the Dalmatian coast, is meagre inland. Sandy wastes, barren hills, grind the heart of the hardiest tiller of the soil. The Serb villages are riddled with consumption and the general standard of living is low. Tough goat and maize form the chief articles of diet. The sweet grapes that grow almost wild in Dalmatia do not flourish farther from the coast. It is a most joyous thing to wander in the vineyards and pluck the luscious green and purple fruit. Michael had a friend who owned acres of grape-land, and one afternoon we explored his estate, eating as we went. There is a free and careless hospitality as to grapes. Those who care to make the excursion some miles from the town may enter any vineyard and pick all that they will.

This almost Biblical freedom in regard to fruit includes the workers. It is, indeed, one of the few things that can be enjoyed communally. Labour organisation there is none. Trade Unions do not exist; factory inspectors are unknown—I could find no trace of any law regulating the employment of children. There is, I believe, a theory as to national education, but its practical administration has yet to be achieved. There are Government schools in the cities, but the villages are still illiterate. The hunger for reading which animates the Russian Slavs is quite unknown to their

Serbian cousins. Peasant arts and crafts still flourish, however, and you may buy beautifully wrought leather belts, hand-woven rugs, gorgeous in colour and texture, for a reasonable sum, but unless you are initiate, factory articles may be palmed off as genuine cottage products. Indeed, more than once I seemed to recognise the hand of Birmingham in some of the shops. Once off the beaten track, however, you may find treasures of finely wrought silver, heavy bangles, huge brooches, achieved with the anvil and hammer.

In Ragusa you may also purchase specimens of Venetian glass, exquisite filigree necklaces, strings of beads, leather bags tooled in gilt, soft red and blue, with all the delicacy of the Latin, though these lovely things are not pressed upon your notice. There are not wanting also modern stores, where shirts, shoes, socks and stockings, samples of mass production, crowd out the evidences of an older, more individual, industry.

Meanwhile the ship held steadily on her way through cloudless days and dreamy nights. We had sorted ourselves out by this time, into swimming, tennis, sun-bathing, conversation and pyjama parties. The last-named vied with each other as to the number and variety of their sets, which, however, the Captain restricted to deck wear, no one out of civies being admitted to the dining-room. It was a gay and garrulous crowd, over which the serious form of an elderly British gentleman, learned in travel and amongst the most erudite of the Hellenic Society, loomed somewhat loweringly. He was disappointed at the non-appearance of some of the leading lights devoted to the digging up of ruins, and during the quiet watches of the siesta would dictate to a long-suffering secretary letters of complaint to the shipping company. It was he who prevailed upon the ship to provide a lady lecturer, who held forth

of an evening on Greek bones and stones lying about Dalmatia.

She spoke, poor lady, to a rapidly decreasing audience, indeed, at last, only an Egyptian poet with the face of a young Rameses, a pretty Frenchwoman and a Dutch doctor were left. They explained that they wished to increase their slight knowledge of the German language.

As we approached the Isles of Greece, however, the tempo changed. A sudden wave of enthusiasm broke out among the British for oracles and tombs, which gradually engulfed the whole ship until even the pyjama party grew interested, and Kingsley's *Heroes* was permanently absent from the ship's library.

The Dalmatian coast faded reluctantly from sight. I watched the Enchanted Islets, flowers of the sea, with the sheer cliffs rising grimly from the mainland slowly disappear. A country of old despotisms, modern tyrannies, primitive agriculture and up-to-date machinery, luxuriant soil and arid earth, Jugo-Slavia halts midway between tribal tradition and national consciousness. Only a leader able to fuse contesting clans, assuage divergent interests, reconcile the exploiter with the exploited in a common aspiration, can hope to canalise her energies into stability. Fascist rulers have no solution for national ills, and barren of inspiration, while decrying Italy seek to emulate her. But for Jugo-Slavia salvation does not lie in the West. The giant statue of Gregor still points towards the East—to the great Slav people who have worked out their redemption by sacrifice and suffering, and found economic justice and peace.

CHAPTER X

Classical Cities, Cats and Crocks

THE worship of Ancient Greece has developed into a disease. That she was and remains pre-eminent in every department of life and letters has become such an ingrained belief that any challenge is regarded as a proof of impudence and ignorance. To admit her supremacy in literature is not enough. Enthusiasts will not be content with general abasement before Æschylus, Sophocles and other fathers of the drama. The admission that Greek architecture, though it leaves some of us cold, is objectively sheer beauty does not assuage them, and when the question of sculpture is raised they insist that the Attic expression of the art is final.

I find myself divorced from this massed praise. It is not that, like an American tourist, I "react to painting but not to 'stattery,'" an Assyrian charioteer, an Egyptian head thrills me with wonder and amaze. It is, I suppose, the smugness of the pretty Greek boys in marble scattered about the museums in every capital in Europe, the complacently paunched Zeus whose fatted arm could never launch the meanest thunderbolt, which chills me. I had hoped, however, that I might find more poignant value among the treasures still remaining in Greece: that on Hellenic soil something of that pity and terror which makes Greek tragedy untouchable would be revealed in stone. I grew anxious as to where I might discover what I sought and asked all and

sundry on the *Kraljica* as to the Galleries in Athens which enshrine the most famous works of art. Putnik offered me a catalogue : the lecture lady a German book on the Acropolis. Even Michael was vague. I think, like me, he found inspiration in the living art of Mestrovic rather than in the antique records of a dead past.

There was an equal lack of interest in the descendants of the ancient Greeks—territorial if not racial heirs. No one knew how they lived or what they earned ; if they were helots of the soil or tilled their own earth. They were not regarded as important items in the landscape—ruins were what mattered. The preservation of a fragmentary pillar, 200 B.C., was far more essential than the proper feeding of an infant merely of to-day.

I had a vague idea that life for the inhabitants of the Greek islands was simple but satisfying ; their outlook, though frugal, must, I felt, be dignified. Modern literature as to things Greek never descends to the mundane details of wages, housing and drains. At Corfu, however, the actual facts of existence as it is to-day struck me in the face.

We set out from the *Kraljica* in pleasurable anticipation. The sea was unbelievably blue and in the distance cypress trees waved invitingly. Moreover, to set one's foot on that historic soil was, I felt, something to be remembered, and it was a breathless moment when the launch slid to the quayside.

And then we landed !

We were surrounded by a horde of the filthiest, most evil-smelling cut-throats imaginable. They clasped batches of badly coloured postcards in their grimy hands and demanded baksheesh angrily and with persistence. We edged our way through the crowd only to find ourselves sur-

rounded by another gang—taxi drivers this time in charge of broken-down Fords.

It was difficult at first to understand the cause of their anger and contempt. Later I understood what had happened to them and to the majority of the people on Sappho's burning isles. Their physical degeneracy and parasitic decadence lie at the doors of those insensate collectors, amateur and professional, who regard the country primarily as a dust-heap of concealed treasure, which they desire to remove. The people, bred on this tradition of valuable bones and costly debris, regard themselves as custodians of these immortal relics and demand that those who desire to rummage in the graves should pay them heavily for the privilege.

The urge for work is not a part of the national psychology. Greece has become a tribute country. To my mind the only hope of escape from this poisoned inertia and depraving sycophancy would be the removal of all the litter of temples, palaces and tombs on which the people live. If a tidal wave could sweep the islands clear of every vestige of the past the inhabitants would be cleansed and a return to normality might follow. Again, if an American millionaire would buy up the ancient welter, lock, stock and barrel and take it to the States the evil influences of the soil, tainted by the lowest form of barter might be expunged. As it is, the Greeks, generally speaking, seem steeped in a mean rapacity, generated by learned archæologists and cheaply curious tourists alike.

Once clear of the brigands we walked along a narrow street, bordered by stalls with what looked like melon, grapes, fish and meat for sale. But it was difficult to discover the exact nature of the goods as everything was black with flies. Peculiarly unpleasant smells tainted the air—two wretched fowls tied together by a yard of string

limped across the road and a consumptive cat, coughing its heart out in blood, dragged along the gutter.

Cats seemed to pervade Corfu. Emaciated creatures, indescribably diseased, infested narrow alleys and tumble-down court-yards. But to me, as to Bunny, the most tragic thing in this, as in the other islands, was the condition of the children both in the towns and in the villages. A sturdy, healthy child was a rarity. The majority suffered from sore eyes which, perpetually exuding, attracted the flies which feasted on them. The poor little things were so inured to this revolting infection that they no longer even tried to brush the flies away.

In all the overcrowded cities of China, Japan, Russia and the Balkans I have never met so nauseating a sight.

Beyond the town we got on to a stony road bordered by fields parched and poor-looking ; the country-side seemed dead, and infinitely depressed. We took a taxi, which had followed us in the certain knowledge we could not walk for long in that dust-laden air, and told the man to drive us to the nearest beauty spot, and through dirt and desolation we reached a pleasant suburb with a wide street that wound uphill and led to an enchanted view. Under the shade of a clump of olive trees stood a bench, miraculously free from touts and beggars. It was not, the taxi-man explained in voluble if pidgin-English, a spot usually frequented by visitors who mostly sought recreation in the port. For this reason the nationals left it comparatively free so that one could enjoy the beauty of the landscape and the flavour of its legend in a delightful peace.

We looked down on a bay, seraphic in its innocent blue waters and golden sands. Flowering shrubs grew low down on the beach ; miniature



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waves lapped against the tiny pier where a little boat was moored. Sheer and straight, out of the bay, within a short distance of the shore, rose a green islet curiously shaped. It had the outlines of a ship—soft, green undergrowth formed the prow and stern, and from an upper deck of green rose a tall slim mast of a tree.

"It is a fairy ship," said Bunny.

"It is indeed," said a quiet voice.

One of our fellow passengers, a scholarly man with a charming, quizzical smile, had joined us.

"That is the ship of Ulysses," he said. "When the immortal wanderer came home to Penelope for the last time, he moored his beloved *Argo*—his falcon of the deep that had taken him and his heroes through perilous seas and faerie lands forlorn—here in this bay. She had been near to his heart for many years, but at last strength had left her, she could no longer buffet against tempest and the waves.

"He would come down to the shore and taking a little boat ride out to her, though perhaps a little sadly, for each succeeding season left an ageing mark, and her proud outlines grew a little blurred.

"And then the Gods took pity on his grief, that the *Argo* must perish and decay, and one sunrise when he reached this spot and thought to see the familiar crumbling hull he found in her place a virginal springing ship of green—just as we see it at this moment. Enshrined in undergrowth were her prow and stern, her decks embowered with growing shrubs and a tall slender tree held her proud mast. And Ulysses thanked the gods."

It was the first touch of magic that Greece had brought us, and it remained unspoilt.

Near at hand was a little café, rustically clean, with Rahat Lacom, dates and lemonade for sale.

We sat at one of the little tables, steeped in the beauty of the scene.

The suburb, we learnt, was the home of those who made their money in the shops and markets of the port ; agriculturists who owned great olive farms, and those who grew currants for export and grapes for wine. Riches and indigence are sandwiched in Greece—beggars with fly-ridden sores lie literally at the gates of the magnificent.

We took the road again regretfully, back through the purlieus of the town, past the wretched children and the consumptive cats—down to the sea.

We returned to the ship to find the lecturer in full swing. Our large and learned Britisher of the Hellenic Society was in the chair, and the meeting was crowded with polyglots. Putnik, it seemed, was translating the Delphic utterances of the speaker into four different tongues ! We did not wait for his British rendering, however, but stole off to the upper deck, where we found Michael and his cocolas outside the wireless cabin. The cocolas, or love-birds as he called them, were in reality a species of canary. They had been with him on many voyages, and he spent much time and patience in trying to teach them to warble a Serbian love song in the fond belief that they would eventually learn it. The birds remained true to their own culture, however, and gave voice after the fashion of their native clime.

“One day they will learn my song,” Michael insisted. “One must have great patience with cocolas as with women !”

We listened to the news of the world on the radio, bald statements with the vitality and vim of parched peas, and later heard the jazz bands of London, Paris and New York, all stamped with the same droning similarity. The calls from passing ships, messages flung into space to be passed on, sounded far more intriguing.

"A little later," said Michael, cheerfully, "we shall run into bad weather. The reports foretell a borer."

This damp and heavy wind blows chill as death and brings shivering rains and high seas. I dislike the borer even more than the sirocco or the mistral. We were, however, spared the mistral, a keen blade of a wind that cuts through tropical heat like a knife, but on our return journey we met a sirocco in full blast. This hot, stifling atmospheric tornado has such a devastating effect on the nerves, is so emotionally disturbing, so mentally wracking, that Jugo-Slavian sailors on the ships within sirocco latitude are specially exempt from punishment for any breach of discipline—short of murder—while it blows.

"I have seen strong men scream like hysterical girls," said Michael, "good men behave like wild beasts—it is a madness that can seize on everyone, driving them to desperate things."

Meanwhile, pending these aberrations of nature, we enjoyed halcyon calm, and two days later arrived at the island of Nauplia. This was the occasion of a huge expedition. There were many notable places of ancient and historic interest on the island, and Putnik, with serried ranks of cars, marshalled his flock for a long day's outing. It must, I think, have been the enervating influence of the atmosphere, and the persuasion of a very charming couple—very keen on Greek remains—that induced Bunny and me to take part in the motor fray. We could have reached the sacred spots in another way—by bus. There is, indeed, as I discovered later, always another and a far cheaper route to such places. Inevitably the local inhabitants do not charter motors, but transact their business through the agency of carrier carts or infirm buses, and where the nationals lead, visitors may follow. Bunny, like me, however,

mislaid her judgment on this occasion, and after payment of an incredible number of drachmas we procured tickets, and with our friends were herded into a ramshackle creak of a Ford, driven by a bandit in a shirt and shorts. I have suffered in my time from springless carts, rickety sedan chairs and diabolical motors, but my transport experience in that old Greek island remains unique. The bandit drove as one possessed, the road was full of ruts and holes, stones and rubbish heaps, but nothing stopped him ; he went over and through everything. Our trip from Trieste to Susak had been bad enough, but that was a mere breeze in comparison with this motor hurricane. Suddenly the engine caught fire and the flames leaped up and out. We screamed to the bandit to stop, but apparently he did not hear. At any rate, he did not heed, and proceeded to beat at the fire with his cap until it died down, when he grinned at us triumphantly over his shoulder. On and on we went, adding new terrors *en route*. A small boy jumped from the road on to the car and lay full length along the bonnet. The bandit struck at him, but without result. Clinging for dear life, but apparently in huge enjoyment, the wretched child travelled for miles, when he incontinently slid off—and another diabolical urchin took his place.

With parched bodies and aching heads, at last we arrived at Epidaurus. Once an important city, all that now is left of her former greatness is the huge amphitheatre, which still remains as perfectly constructed, and intrinsically elegant, as at the initial opening, thousands of years ago. Tier upon tier the stone seats, rising from the lowest level of a deep valley, circle those high hills that hold the theatre cupped. From every place, in the front row on the ground-level, right up to the back of the gods, the stage is visible. That ancient

audience of fifty thousand could see everything that went on.

Moreover, they could hear !

I perched myself in the topmost tier of the gallery—where, perhaps, the reverend citizens of Epidaurus once criticised young Aristophanes as an impertinent modern—and listened while one of our party, standing in the outer circle of the stage, read in a normal voice an extract from an English paper. Not a syllable was lost ; every word floated up and out in perfect distinctness. Someone dropped a silver coin stage-centre. Its tinkle rang clear as a bell. The vast amphitheatre held the lost secret of acoustics.

The clear austerity of the design, the simple springing pillars that mark the sole entry to the stage make the amphitheatre one of the most impressive monuments to culture that Greece can show. Here, as nowhere else, I felt the influence of that aristocracy of genius which stamped world-drama for its own. The amphitheatre, however, was the only vital thing in a desert of scorched hills and stunted vegetation. The roads farther inland became so rudimentary that the bandit had to moderate his pace and we had time to take in the hovels on the wayside. Surrounded by garbage of all kinds, without the most primitive sanitation, these wretched little places built of stone and mud, and very often windowless, had only a doorway to admit the sun and air. They were like eyeless faces inexpressibly dehumanised. The children with fly-ridden sores screamed for coppers ; the men held up broken bits of pottery, ancient and modern, for sale ; women ground corn between two millstones as in the Old Testament, and cats, in a last state of decline, feebly clawed at heaps of offal.

But what did all this matter ? Were we not bound for the place where Esculapius, the great

healer, had once lived, to the very spot where it was alleged his house had stood? The particular patch of earth which the sage had owned was occupied by a museum replete with plaques, busts, and other reproductions of the great man's anatomy in plaster, said to be copies of the originals scattered in all parts of the globe. There was nothing of distinction in the building, it might have been the headquarters of a rotary club or the local branch of the Hellenic Society. It was, however, cool and clean and smelt of disinfectant. Meanwhile the news of the party's arrival had spread, and all the postcard fiends, crockery vendors, and mere ordinary touts had hastened to the spot.

One figure stood out from the crowd—a fine sedate old woman who sat on a stool winding bobbins with native grown flax impervious to everything round her. Whether she took up her position in the full blaze of publicity—innumerable cameras snapped her—from choice or indifference, it was difficult to say. She did not refuse the drachmas showered upon her, but on the other hand she did not court them and, either way, she was an admirable example of primitive handicraft and her work put mechanically driven bobbins to shame.

It was on the whole an exhausting morning, though I felt the Greek spinner was a fitting pendant to the amphitheatre, and I hold both in grateful remembrance.

The luxury of the *Kraljica* with its bathing pool, electric fans, and cooling drinks, seemed almost unreal after the squalor and wretchedness on shore. But, by the following morning, life seemed re-attuned, and we were ready to believe that the next excursion would be less sordid and more stimulating. We were going to Mycenæ, the city built for Perseus, by the Cyclops, where

Agamemnon lived in splendour. It was to Mycenæ, I remembered, that he brought Cassandra after the fall of Troy to meet his death by Clytemnestra's dagger. The mere thought was thrilling, and I was prepared to endure all the tortures of the previous day and more to see the ruins of the palace, the setting of the first and greatest play of the Orestean trilogy.

I paid the price! The route was longer and more dusty, the smells more horrible, the dehumanisation of the people and their villages more complete.

We left the cars at the base of the great grey hill on whose summit Mycenæ was built. The sense of death implicit in Greek soil grew heavier as we toiled up the long ascent. As we approached the ruins, the earth gave out a dank smell, almost, it seemed to me, of corruption. The hill-sides were covered with wild thyme, dried and parched by the heat, but the pungent aromatic scent of it turned sickly sweet. We stood, I felt, on evil ground and I remembered what D'Annunzio had said in his *Cities of the Dead*, that the incestuous longings, the dark desires, of ancient sins infect the living men and women who disturb their graves.

"I don't like this place," said Bunny. "There is nothing beautiful about it. I don't want to see the palace ruins, and I am not going into any of the tombs. I shall just sit and watch the sea," and she settled herself on a stone close to the gigantic rocks piled up by the snarling Titans unleashed by Perseus.

The lecturer in full song was quoting every imaginable authority as to the original town planning of the city, its age and industries, and the polyglots like faithful sheep herded after her. Gradually the sound of the voice faded, and leaving Bunny perched on her stone, I wandered off to

look far down the road up which Agamemnon's chariots must have thundered when he came back from Troy in triumph. In the distance the sea lazily lapped the sands under a sky flawlessly blue. Agamemnon must have seen those softly curving ripples, have looked up at the sky. He must have turned at the bend of the road with a thunder of hoofs—eagerly watching for his home towers. I had almost recaptured that thrill of the imagination which eliminates time, visualising the procession of the heroes, when the spell was suddenly broken, and the scrambling of feet sent the vision ascatter. A stout, fussy woman, accompanied by a thin elderly man, was hoisting herself up the hill, clutching at something in her hand.

I felt, somehow, she had found a crock. The hill-side was thickly strewn with broken earthenware of all sorts and sizes, some of which, embedded in the earth, had acquired a look of aged authenticity. Others, however, to the detached observer, were quite obviously of yesterday ; but to the eye of the enthusiast they were all trophies. The Mycenæ slopes as a matter of fact are the repository of all the broken china of the district. The peasants from miles around bring their smashed table-ware and discreetly bury it in little mounds. I was sure that the American had unearthed a piece recently planted. This, however, was not her own view.

"Look, Joe, look," she cried ecstatically, "see what I have found." With shining eyes she opened her hand, disclosing a small brown fragment of earthenware, surprisingly like a broken bit from a ginger-beer bottle.

"Say!" she became dithyrambic, "maybe it belonged to one of the pots they used in the kitchen at Agamemnon's palace." The idea enthused her, and she sought eagerly for confirmation. Later, I heard her tell an enraptured

country-woman the story of the find, gloriously enwrapped with legend.

"Isn't it great?" she gazed lovingly at the broken bit. "The guide told me it is made of the same clay they used in ancient times. There's a potter's field near the palace, though it is left idle now. I'm terribly lucky to have found it. He says it must be part of one of Cassandra's cooking-pots. Just think, Sadie, Cassandra and her cooking-pot thousands of years ago and me holding it in my very hand to-day!"

The guide was suitably remunerated for the information and doubtless resalted the hill-side with more Cassandra bits ready for the next find.

It was impossible in face of this to try and reconstruct, and I looked dispassionately through the high gateway that had led to the palace, unable to conjure up a single ghost, though I hungered for Clytemnestra and her lover; but the lady lecturer had scared them, and the American chased them finally away.

By this time the *Kraljica* crowd had reassembled and we were taken down the hill to a place designated as Agamemnon's tomb. It was damp and dark and had a horrid smell, and I was feeling sick and angry that I had been induced to come when another and a rival lecturer—Greek this time—turned up and said it wasn't the authentic tomb at all, which, according to the latest authority, was a mile further on. I let the crowd stream off, ready and eager to swallow any tale of any tomb, and sat myself down among the thyme. There Bunny joined me, quite convinced that Mycenæ was a fraud, and that an acre of woodland or pasture country was worth a whole wilderness of archaic soil.

Watching the excited and irrelevant crowd still in pursuit, I came to the conclusion that of the polyglot hordes who trample the soil of Greece, and

return to their native towns raving of her beauty and art, the majority are merely exhibitionists, desiring to pose as æsthetes. There are probably archæologists who can reconstruct a dead civilisation from mouldy remnants and find an intense joy in doing so. Most visitors, however, in my opinion do not derive any emotional or mental reaction from the contemplation of Greek charnal houses, they merely wish to say they have been to these classic spots.

We left Mycenæ in a flaming sunset, most of the company clutching strange bits and scraps of potsherds. The final touch of irony came when the guide informed us with patriotic pride that the whole of the hill-side, the site of the great palace, the tombs and the rocks were leased to Coty the scent king, who used the wild thyme for his wares.

The borer fell on us that evening. Its unutterable chill turned the butterfly brightness of the ship into the greyness of a bedraggled moth. We all produced woollies, waterproofs and Wellingtons, and sat with chattering teeth over the radiators. The wind, however, disappeared as swiftly as it came and by the time we reached Piræus—the harbour for Athens—the world was once more full of sunshine. Most of the passengers went on immediately to the capital. Bunny and I preferred to have a look round. The streets were wider and better kept than in the other towns, but the conditions and the people were the replicas of what we had found elsewhere. The demands for baksheesh were as incessant; the children as sickly; the cats as suffering.

We took the tube to Athens—quite an up-to-date, well-built affair. This Western product was in striking contrast to its Eastern surroundings, but the passengers, mostly of the working class, in shabbiness and dirt restored the equilibrium. Our friend Michael met us at the end of the journey.

The ship being in port, he was free and was prepared to show us everything we wished to see. We lunched at a very pleasant restaurant on national dishes, *pulaffe*, grapes, peaches, excellent wine and Turkish coffee. But even here, the tables were invaded by touts, though Michael, knowing the language, was able to send them packing.

Athens remains to me a melancholy hotch-potch of classic ruins, loathsome slums and undistinguished buildings. The National Museum was a bitter disappointment. The pottery exhibits left me cold ; undistinguished in colour and conventional in form, they were all slightly pedestrian, with the exception of an exquisite Greek urn, which might have been the inspiration of Keats' deathless lines. The statues included the small-headed youth variety, with occasional specimens of superbly masculine types, the incarnation of male beauty, the apotheosis of the sheerly physical, the perfect body without a hint of soul. I realised also what I had previously suspected, that the Greeks were initially responsible for the sculptural portrayal of woman as physically depressed and mentally soggy. The "Winged Victory" with its magnificent lines curving upward to achievement is a glorious exception ; the statue of "Grief," by Pheidias in the British Museum is another. But, these and other examples apart, innumerable broody females, whose lines grow down towards the earth instead of springing from it, fatigue the memory. A woman's body is at its best in exultation, depression relaxes the muscles, deposes the proud carriage of the head. Physically relaxed, spiritually vacuous, the majority of female statues in the museums of Athens suggest women of woolly bodies and enslaved minds. This social and political attitude to the mere mother and wife, as apart from the Aspasia of ancient Greece so faithfully reflected in her art, has been everywhere recopied.

The contemporary attitude towards woman is distinctly of the harem. A limited number of girls are employed in the Government departments as typists and filing clerks, but on pain of dismissal they must not walk or talk with any male, *en route* to or from their offices. Apart from this minority women take no part in political or municipal life, and so far as I could discover, are quite incurious as to the general condition of the people.

We visited some of the architectural remnants scattered through the city, but none of them impressed me very much. They suffer from their mean surroundings, and it was not until we reached the summit of the Acropolis that we could visualise the faintest reflection of the city's former glory. And even from the top of the great hill, under the shadow of what is left of the Parthenon, it was difficult to conjure up the vision. One could obliterate the town with its mean streets turning the eyes towards the sweep of Piræus, but inevitably the drone of many guides, the high-pitched voices of innumerable lecturers closed the mind.

"Is there any time when the Acropolis is not explained?" I asked Michael.

"There are guides here every day," he answered. "You see, tourists come in winter as in summer. For myself I think they take from the beauty and the history of this place. . . . But if you come very early in the morning, you will be alone. You may watch the sun rise over the sea and catch a glimpse of immortal loveliness."

Acres and acres of shattered columns, broken pediments, long wide flights of steps—the whole suggested an achievement of manual labour as staggering as the genius of construction. Imposing in its lofty decay, terrifying in its commentary on the transience of civilisation, the Acropolis can only evoke a classic admiration. It forms no link between the humans of 500 B.C. and their struggling

descendants. That link I found in a bronze statue at one of the museums—a tiny and most precious figure of a child jockey that seemed to bridge the years between its birth and now. The palpitating little body seemed alive, the eager wistful face shone with immortal eagerness and fervour. The artist was unknown, but the figure, dating back three thousand years, expressed all the emotions and desires of to-day.

Some twenty miles beyond Athens, still on the sea coast, lies the pleasure-ground of the city. Here we found sumptuous villas, well-built bungalows, gardens, bathing pools, olive groves, and as Michael called them, "grapeyards" in abundance. Glefader is the name of this modern paradise where poverty and rags do not enter, and the children of the wealthy are fresh-faced and rosy-skinned, with never a fly-infested sore to mar their comeliness. A huge café of white marble with steps leading to the golden sands is the centre of entertainment. Flood-lighting, a charming orchestra, an excellent dinner in the open air, a first-class dancing floor and the plash of the waves made up a marvellous programme. The glamour of the summer night, the scents of the garden, moonlight on a summer sea shut out all the disconcerting contrasts of the capital—of which I realised most of the residents of Glefader were quite unconscious !

On this spot, it is said, the ancient Greeks also took their pleasure and watched the heroes contesting in the Olympian games. Something of the heroic must, I think, have impregnated the atmosphere, for Bunny, whose exploits in the swimming line usually hug the shore, suddenly took a dive and challenged Michael in a race to a distant buoy. I fully expected her to be brought back shuddering with exhaustion, but the Rabbit has unexpected powers of resistance and returned tired but triumphant, and in good fettle.

We moved our table nearer to the shore and toasted Michael's country and our own, our future and our friends. We tired the sun with talking, but lingered on and on, loth to lose the final moments of that perfect evening. We managed to catch the last bus, however, and eventually arrived in the smelly atmosphere of Athens.

The *Kraljica* sailed early the next morning ; my last glimpse of a depressing and decadent land being the figure of a postcard vendor inveigling a tourist into the purchase of his ill-printed wares.

We made a quick journey back to Ragusa, where most of the passengers went ashore, on to Split and finally to Susak, and so homeward once again, passing in a matter of a few days from serfdom through Feudalism to Capitalism, and finding in all three states the same tragic waste of wealth, the same degradation of human life.

CHAPTER XI

The Renaissance of Russian Culture

WHETHER one believes in the Capitalist system, clings to the Divine Right of Kings, or is interested in Collective ownership, it is impossible to remain insensible to the change of temperature, psychological and economic, which sets in at the Soviet border. Unemployment, with its inevitable depression, lack of security, spiritual ennui, the dry-rot of hopelessness symptomatic of Europe to-day, falls behind. One meets an atmosphere charged with purpose and vitality.

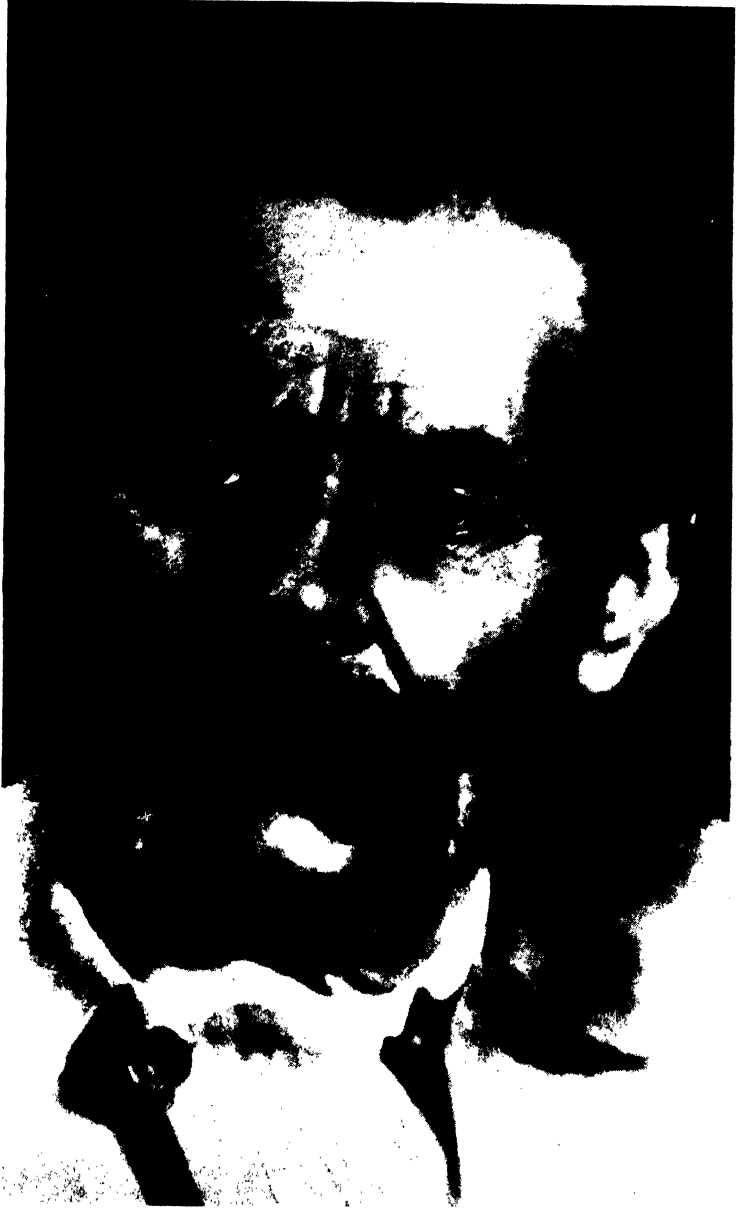
Four years ago I went to the U.S.S.R., crossing the Polish frontier into White Russia, and from there on to the Ukraine. Conditions were hard ; meat was scarce, clothing at a premium. Then all Russia walked in rags and fed on bread and tea. The huge parties of peasants and workers who made vast excursions all over the country at special prices, carried a rye loaf under the arm, while the head of each family brandished a metal teapot, flashing like a scimitar. Trains ran at irregular intervals, hopelessly overcrowded and hours late. But then, as now, I felt the impact of new life, though its material expression compared with the present was primitive and stunted.

This year I went to Russia by air, which meant leaving Croydon at 4.30 one afternoon and arriving in Moscow the next, with a night at Berlin in between. It was early autumn and the weather, ideal as far as Koenigsberg, suddenly grew overcast and for hours we flew in drenching rain over the

pasture lands of Latvia. The plane was full as far as Kovno, where most of the passengers got out. Their places were surprisingly taken at the Soviet border by peasant families, complete with bundles and baskets. Old women in traditional head-cloth and shawl, young girls with bobbed hair and jumpers, children, babies, and their sturdy fathers unconcernedly sat down. They settled themselves as casually as though they were in a tram-car—even the babies gurgled appreciation! The U.S.S.R. to-day is essentially air-minded, all ages and conditions fly. Peasants from districts where mountain tracks take the place of roads and wheeled traffic is unknown, plane right across the country without batting an eyelid. Flying is all in the day's work, surprise is reserved for the unfamiliar spectacle of carts and horses in the city streets! Russia almost at a bound has passed from medieval feudalism—Capitalism only touched the fringes of society—to a modern, highly mechanised state.

Over the Soviet border the aspect of the country changed. Grazing fields gave way to beets, cabbages, potatoes, oats, with an occasional outburst of glass-houses where early vegetables, fruit and flowers are forced. Mile after mile of Collectivist farms went by, veiled in the saturating downpour which hemmed us in on every side, and made me realise how peculiarly and spiritually damp Noah must have felt in his waterproof ark.

The Flying Ground at Moscow was humming with arriving and departing planes, and a long queue of passengers were waiting in the customs. Regulations in this department remain largely unaltered. As at my previous visit, the amount of money brought in was noted, particulars of jewellery taken and a copy duly handed over. Nowadays, however, foreign money is not exchanged for Soviet at the frontier, but is a matter for arrangement with the banks—5½



"MAXIM GORKI: BELOVED OF THE U.S.S.R."

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roubles to the £1 instead of 8½ as at my previous visit. For most purposes, however, foreigners pay in *valuta*—the national currencies outside the U.S.S.R.—at fixed and moderate prices. The waiting crowd—workers, peasants and intelligensia—talked and laughed together. The somnolence of the railway stations with hordes of would-be passengers encamped is not present at the air-ports, where a time-table is rigidly observed and planes arrive and depart with rigorous punctuality. Air traffic belongs to the day of the Soviet regime, and untrammelled by tradition and ingrown inefficiency runs smoothly and well.

I got through my examination very quickly and by eight o'clock Russian time and six o'clock by central European—ten hours after I left Berlin—was settled in my room at the Hotel Metropole, spacious, well furnished with bathroom attached ! A bath, moreover, that duly functioned with hot water always on tap. Plumbing indeed has undergone a real change in the U.S.S.R. Formerly pipes leaked, and H. and C. were mere delusive labels and only at rare intervals did a faint trickle appear, Russian domestic sanitation under revolutionary strain having utterly broken down. To-day, however, a new era has dawned—in the towns at all events !

In the restaurant, crowded with national and foreign delegates to the Congress, dinner was in full swing. The food was perfectly cooked and the menu varied. Hotel life in Moscow indeed is quite up to the standard of any European capital. Orchestras of trained musicians play at lunch and dinner and there are dance suppers for those who want them. Remembering my stay at the "Continental" at Kiev, the alteration amazed me. Four years ago, as I have said, the general menu for nationals and foreigners alike was bread and tea. To-day not only hotels and restaurants, but

Co-operative dining-rooms attached to all factories, offices and business premises provide a cheap and plentiful commissariat. This was a Russia outside my knowledge ; but I was to experience even more exciting things !

I had come to the U.S.S.R. primarily to attend the First Congress of the Soviet Writers who had recently taken over the control of literary affairs with surprising results. Up to 1932 the selection and publication of books was in the hands of the Association of Proletarian Writers, familiarly known as R.A.P.P. They dealt with every expression of literature, even poetry and fiction, and their decision was final. Being a proletarian society, however, it followed that the social class of an author rather than his artistic merit became the chief concern. If you were a true blue son of toil, dullness of matter and defects in style were passed over, whereas a member of the intelligensia might write like an angel and be turned down ! Men of established reputation like Radex, Ehrenberg, Alexei Tolstoi, Tretyakow, who wrote *Chinese Testament*, Sholokov, author of *And Quiet Flows the Don*, escaped the taboo, but new talent had little chance.

"It was like a Masonic Lodge," a novelist said to me, "to which the password was manual labour."

As a result Soviet book sales went down and the demand for pre-revolution authors, national and foreign, went up. Dickens became a best seller, and Sir Walter Scott ran him close, while the demand for Tchekov, Turgenev, Gogol and Tolstoi grew prodigious. The people were tired of the bare bones of propaganda, they wanted live human stories of the great Collectivist farms, factories and fisheries, the whole panorama of the Soviets painted in words. The position grew acute. The population of 180,000,000 readers or potential

readers demanded novels and novels they would have.

It was Maxim Gorki who brought this literary revolution to a triumphant close. The veteran author, a Communist years before the Soviet was dreamt of, who suffered fine, imprisonment and social persecution for his faith, is the most beloved and revered citizen of the U.S.S.R. Children way-lay him in the Moscow streets ; crowds wait for hours on the chance of seeing him. The Air Force have named their latest airplane *Maxim Gorki*, and a " Gorki " flotilla of cruisers is in process of construction. Deputations from the most remote parts of the country wait upon him daily. He is *persona grata* with everyone.

On Gorki's advice, Stalin dissolved the R.A.P.P., and the Union of Soviet Writers, void of all class distinction, took its place. The importance of this removal of the class ban cannot be over-emphasised. It signifies the modification of one of the fundamentals of the Revolution—the political and social subordination of the brain workers to the manual workers, who after generations of enforced ignorance and the acceptance of an incredibly low standard of life, found themselves in possession of the national wealth, its organisation and administration. From 1917 a rooted distrust of the *bourgeois* intellectuals remained imbedded in the Soviet political consciousness and a deliberate inequality of treatment was meted out to them. Now, however, class barriers are breaking, the intelligensia is being welcomed back into the Russian fold.

The suppression of R.A.P.P. had an amazing and immediate result. Freed from caste prejudice, the intellectuals rallied to their opportunity, the proletariat stimulated by competition discovered new authors, and novels of adventure poured from the press, some of them reaching net sales of over

a million. One of the first acts of the Union was to lift the ban on fairy stories and Hans Andersen, the Brothers Grimm, Perrault; and the writers of Russian Folk Tales, restored to their former prestige, sold like hot cakes. Soviet children, however, like the rest prefer a more up-to-date magic. Elves no longer interest them—seven-league boots seem idiotic when you can take an airplane! But fantastics in the shape of animals or wise men are enormously popular and writers do their humble best to serve the juvenile market, which is one of the most profitable in the publishing trade.

Everywhere the demand for books has increased. With the renaissance of Soviet Culture a hunger for reading, a passion for literary self-expression has seized on a whole people. The Union continued to grow in influence and popularity until two years after its inauguration the Committee decided to hold a Writers' Congress and give the nation an account of all they had done.

The Congress was held in the Trade Union Hall, a splendid building with a vast Central Chamber hung with the portraits of the world's great poets, novelists and dramatists—Pushkin and Shelley, Goethe and Shakespeare, Tolstoi, Turgeniev and Molière side by side.

Night after night a public audience of three thousand enthusiasts crowded the galleries, lined the floor, tried desperately to push in somewhere, while the police at the entrance were besieged by an imploring overflow—members of every class, all eager to hear about literature.

Before the revolution the hall had been a most exclusive club. In the corridors, full of jostling comrades in Tartar caps, Ukrainian embroideries, blue shirts and lounge suits, diplomats used to walk, and on the platform where Gorki the ex-labourer sat in his presidential chair, Grand Dukes had foregathered.

I watched the lined, shrewd old face, the shock of hair, the eyes that with their kindly twinkle reminded me of H. G. Wells. Sixty-seven years of age, with a consumption-racked body, Gorki is still keen and alert. He has lived to see an impossibly revolutionary dream come true, and now in the content of Soviet fulfilment has turned to his first love—letters. The author of that blazing piece of realism, *In the Depths*, the sensitively delicate *My Journal*, who, after the day's work had taught himself to write by the sheer sweat of his brow, told his young eagles what they wanted to perfect their art.

"Technique," said the old revolutionary, surprisingly. "Technique! It is not enough to know what to say, you must learn how to say it."

And then he went on to explain how and where the perfection of style should be sought. I had the great advantage of an inspired interpretation. Michael Korchmar—a Soviet author—is one of those rare people who can not only speak and understand the principal European languages, but is able to give the essential colour and shape of every phrase. As the words came from Gorki's lips in Russian, this amazing man reminted them for me in English so that I had the feeling of having understood at first hand everything that was said.

Gorki was a revelation. He insisted that Soviet writers must study the great authors, Russian and foreign of the nineteenth century, outstanding creators of critical realism and revolutionary romanticism, remarkable for their style, method of approach and characterisation, who for the most part had escaped from the close atmosphere of their class.

How, I asked myself, could *bourgeois* writers be regarded as exemplars for Communists ?

But Gorki held that the era of Capitalism in Western Europe had sounded the knell of a dying

Feudalism and that the more liberal-minded had conceived that the new system would make for individual freedom, and stamp out the last remnants of caste oppression. Their very criticism of certain Capitalist aspects showed their belief in the theory as a whole. Therefore their best work was founded on a passionate belief coupled with a style that was the outcome of a long literary tradition.

And so Soviet youth, bubbling over with emotional ecstasy and intellectual conviction, must work and work to perfect its powers.

Gone, I felt for ever, was the epoch when to be a Russian *bourgeois* was to be an outcast ! Economic security has released the artistic instincts of the nation—henceforth the writer, whatsoever his political creed, has honour where honour is due.

I emerged that evening from the Congress Hall keyed up to an exultant pitch. Here, as it seemed to me, the art of writing, too often treated as the handmaiden of publicity, was given its rightful place. A massed crowd filled the square, straining to catch a glimpse of the authors as they left. Not in this fashion are English scribes acclaimed ; imagine a concourse stretching half a mile outside Queen's Hall waiting to greet the readers of erudite papers on Victorian literature !

Night after night—the day sessions were not so crowded—the devotees rolled up. Bukarin, the editor of *Izvestia* with a circulation of three million, gave an exhaustive analysis of poetry from the early Greeks to the immediate Russians—and everyone sat tight. Tolstoi read a paper on the significance of gesture to the drama. Delegates from every Republic in the Union urged their particular point of view—the limited editions of books written in Ukrainian, White Russian, Georgian, etc., all the different minority languages

of the U.S.S.R., the necessity for better distribution and translation.

All through the Congress, punctuating addresses which took in the whole gamut of the author's craft, deputations from Collectivist farms, factories—railway workers, engineers, the Air Force, the Army, the Navy, every section of the community, lined up and special representatives addressed the Congress. The burden of their demands was inevitably the same—books—books—more books ! They clamoured for stories dealing with the special work they performed. The Air Force required epics of plane construction ; engineers plumped for a steel saga. The peasants shouted for stories of the earth. Their appetite was omnivorous.

A poor *bourgeois* writer, my mouth watered at the prospect ! Why, oh why, I asked myself, don't English people buy books with the same fervour ? So big is the demand in Russia that supplies cannot keep pace with requirement. Whole editions are bought up on the day of publication and vast paper mills are hastily being built to cope with the reading situation. The sales of a recent novel were more than two millions.

Authors and journalists have come into their own during these last two years. Reporters and sub-editors work six hours a day for a five-day week, and the minimum salary is 650 roubles a month, as compared with 350 roubles earned by skilled mechanics. In Russia the vast majority of married women in all classes work also, so that the family earnings of a journalistic family are considerable.

There is, moreover, no limit to the amount authors may make, and they can spend their earnings—subject to income tax—as they choose, rent a country and a town house, buy a car, indulge in the most expensive food and drink, travel, fly—

do what they will ! Even the beginner is well off, advance royalties on a generous scale being paid on delivery of each batch of copy.

The Union of Writers regards its members with a benevolent eye. The Committee duly elected run Houses of Rest for tired fictionists in the most beautiful surroundings, and if the creative spirit does not move them to work, well then, they may live in peace until it does. For it is not quantity but quality the Union is after. The novelist Babel, who has not written a word for five years, is adjured not to hurry. He must wait until he has something vital to say before he attempts to say it. The Union has a membership of 1500 with hundreds more clamouring to join. The essential qualification is the publication of a work of outstanding literary merit on which the decision of the Committee is final. I am told the standard is a high one.

Immature talent is fostered and encouraged, to the professional eye perhaps unduly so ! Every member of the Union has his or her special devotees who deluge them with manuscripts. It is said that Gorki alone receives hundreds of first attempts every day !

Throughout the U.S.S.R. the wall newspaper, as it is called, has been established. Sometimes of typewritten sheets, sometimes hand printed, it represents the collective talent of farms and factories, offices and works in their hundreds. Under an elected editorship MSS are selected and in their turn conspicuously hung where everyone may read them. I have seen these news sheets in quite small co-operatives and in huge concerns, and the stories and articles submitted are far in excess of the acceptance.

"Graphomania has seized on the people," said my friend Korchmar. "It is like your Elizabethan age—everyone aspires to write."

Those contributors who show talent are taken up by the local branch of the Union and gradually but inevitably get their chance. In Russia the author is regarded as an asset, not as a liability.

There are no restrictions as to a writer's choice of subject, though an attack on the Soviet system would not be published ! And here in view of the criticism as to the Russian censorship of ideas I should explain that the economic ban is practically the only one existent.

Exposure of official mismanagement, injustice, bad distribution, corruption, is welcomed both by the newspaper and the book public. Self-criticism is the key-note of Soviet life. I do not suggest that a novel or any kind of work exploiting the advantages of the Capitalist system would see the light. For one reason, I doubt if you could find any but the most aged author in favour of the regime ! The number who remember the Tsarist rule are growing fewer. The population includes 130,000,000 under thirty years of age, many of whom have grown up outside Capitalism and cannot visualize its conditions, in the same way that the majority of Britishers cannot imagine Soviet existence with its vast areas of enterprise, and diversities of human types.

It is for economic reasons that books written from a pro-Christian point of view would be rejected. The argument—a mistaken one from my point of view—is that Christianity preaches contentment with existing conditions, encourages superstition and makes for political corruption. It should be remembered that the Soviet Government regards Christianity from the same standpoint that the British Government of early Victorian days regarded Atheism—as a blasphemous and subversive attack on established rule. Nowadays Atheism has become respectable in England. Another decade will probably find Christianity

accorded a similar place in official Russian society. The Soviet regime, established seventeen years only, has already shed many of its literary inhibitions. It has taken us far longer to attain less liberty !

The change in political and social technique that struck me most was the elimination of that unceasing propaganda on the wireless and in the Press which formerly urged the necessity of renewed effort, further sacrifice on the febrile nerves of a jaded people. That day is over. The shortage of food is ended ; the segregation of class has passed away ; the famine for tractors assuaged—the whole nation is on the tip-toe of joyous realization.

I shall never forget an evening I spent at Maxim Gorki's. He had invited all the Congress delegates to the beautiful eighteenth-century house where a grateful nation has installed him. It was here that Lenin died and his personality seems stamped upon the clean-cut proportions of the lofty rooms, the classic pillars—the sudden breathless glimpse of green and virginal woods through open windows.

The house lies outside a village called Gorki, some miles from Moscow. It is not, however, named after the author, nor is it his native place. He chose the *nom de plume* for other reasons. "Gorki" means bitter, and the word tragically describes the cruel disappointments and rejections of the author's early days. Life has hit the fine old fighter very hard. His only son died of consumption last year, and a young niece and devoted companion is the nearest living relative. But as a workman said to me : " He is in all our hearts—the heart of Soviet Russia."

There is always an element of surprise about things Russian, social and economic, and the intimation that an expedition to the great man was starting right away came to me quite unexpectedly

over the phone. We should have started about five, but the incredible delays that always cluster round any scheduled arrival or departure in the U.S.S.R. held us up till six, when a cavalcade of cars set out. Norwegians, Swedes, Danes, Germans, French, Italians, Spaniards, Belgians, all were there ; Roy de Bloch, Malhieux, Ernst Toller, Martin Andersen Nexø—and me as solitary representative of the literary British ! I travelled with the novelist Tretyakov, a delightful man who had spent some years in Peking, a Norwegian journalist who, originally a stoker, had gravitated to a newspaper office and was now a sub-editor, and Kwon-Lan-shi, a little Chinese girl, who had dodged arrest as a Communist in her native country and gone to Germany, only to find herself thrown into a concentration camp, from which after a year she had managed to escape.

We drove out west from Moscow through the new garden city, with its modern factories and flats along the Mozhaïskoye Chaussée, the road over which Napoleon's grand army marched in 1812. The scenery is flat, except for a sudden unexpected rising—the hill from which the Emperor looked on Moscow to see his defeat written in flame.

The rain came down in sheets and a green melancholy settled on the country. We journeyed past slender birch woods alternated with brick kilns, vegetable farms and low-lying pastures, fields of beet, broccoli, potatoes, stopping now and again for the rest of the cars to overtake us. The woods grew more dense, the rain dripped audibly on the rich mould, rabbits scampered over the road and now and again the outlines of a big house reared itself against a distant sky-line. It was dusk when we reached the village, and the Chinese girl, not yet recovered from her experiences, was half-asleep. An adorable little creature, she looked about sixteen, and though her only

European tongue was German, made friends with everyone.

Gorki's house was a surprise. Like most people, my mind had become imbued with the idea that the Soviet had wilfully and deliberately destroyed the homes of the nobles and landed gentry, razing to the ground everything left by the civil war. But, as I found, all round Moscow you may see comfortably inhabited mansions of eighteenth and early nineteenth-century style, in perfect preservation. The cars turned through wide gates, we passed a tiny and delicious wood, to be met on Gorki's hospitable threshold by members of the Union Committee who conducted us upstairs to a vast room, austere furnished, where Gorki in blue shirt and red tie received us.

We all sat down, and by good fortune I found myself next to one of the most famous and charming of Russian writers—Marshak, author of children's stories, satires, fantasies, which have been translated into many tongues. He speaks English perfectly, and before 1914 was a student at the London University when Hilaire Belloc was professor of English Literature. Marshak returned to Russia in 1917, joined the revolution and fought throughout the civil war. He translated all the questions I put to Gorki, for the great man laid himself out to be bombarded and interrogations rained like hail.

To begin with I asked what he thought of modern Western writers.

"Romain Rolland is, I think, a great creative force," he answered. "But the rest strike me as evanescent. There is no one to take the place of Flaubert, Shaw, the Goncourts, or even of H. G. Wells in his earlier works like *Kipps* or *Mr. Polly*. France has nothing immediate to offer—Celine's last novel is full of decadent sensuality. The hero resembles Artzibaskeff's favourite creation and

may be described as a vertical he-goat in pantaloons."

Gorki has heterodox opinions on many of the Russian authors. Tolstoi he likes and reveres. Tchekov he regards as a great master equal to Gogol, the Father of the Russian novel. But for Dostoievsky he has nothing but contempt. The old eyes flashed with fire as in a sudden burst of wrath he insisted that the author of *Crime and Punishment* was "a degenerate who feared reality and preached defeatism and despair."

Public opinion, while it does not wholly endorse Gorki's estimate, finds Dostoievsky incorrigibly heavy. He is one of the great pre-revolution writers conspicuously neglected.

"And our young English authors," I asked, "what of them?"

The rugged old man shrugged his shoulders.

"They are anæmic," he said, "trivial, shallow. They have lost interest in life and have run away from it. They do not face the realities, and as a consequence their technique suffers—their style has gone."

He glanced up quickly. "You cannot wonder," he said kindly. "What constructive impulse can remain in a Capitalist society which postulates permanent unemployment? What strong creative force can flourish among millions of under-fed men?"

"What is left?" He looked round the table, crowded with every national type. "Only denunciation or satire."

"Satire is a most destructive weapon," I pleaded.

"Yes, but it is destructive. Your young writers have nothing constructive to say—therein lies their failure. They write of fantastics; tell stories of the secure or tragedies of the dispossessed. I cannot recall one vital English novel with a constructive challenge to the present-day social system."

Gorki, like most Russian men of letters, is well in

touch with Western books, many of which are translated and run into big editions. Shaw still remains the most popular of the moderns, with Liam O'Flaherty and of the Americans Upton Sinclair, Dos Passos and Theodore Dreiser.

There is no law of copyright in the U.S.S.R., but any author who has made personal contact with the Union receives translation royalties on a liberal scale. Only, as *valuta* is scarce the money has to be paid in roubles, which necessitates a visit to Russia; Soviet currency is not negotiable elsewhere. It is, however, possible to spend a marvellous holiday on your receipts, and the Union see to it that you are given a royal time.

Gorki has immense faith in the future of Soviet literature. But he is under no delusion as to its present position in the world. The impulse is there, the splendid urge for life expressed in channels never before exploited; the romance of a steel plant, owned and created by the people; the building up of huge farms from waste lands. All the activities of a nation suddenly released.

"In the old days I used often to be hard up for a theme," a pre-revolution novelist told me. "Now there's something new to write about every day. It's impossible to deal with the torrent of fresh ideas."

But in spite of the amazing spate of new impressions, Gorki insists that Soviet writing is still in its infancy.

"For example," he said, "the post-revolution woman has not yet been portrayed in her fullest development in our literature. She has not been given her just place in our art. Admitted to the most complete equality in every walk of Soviet life, neither the drama nor the novel has given a sufficiently striking portrait of her. Indeed," he went on whimsically, "it is noticeable that playwrights create as few feminine roles as possible. Many plays have an entire masculine cast."

This led to a discussion as to what type of woman would eventually evolve.

"How," I asked, "is it possible to create a Soviet heroine when she fills the same roles as man? Love can no longer be the main theme. The chief incentives to passion, ambition and sex rivalry have been removed. In the Soviet every honour and distinction are possible to any man; and divorce by the simple process of registration leaves the coast clear for marriage."

"She will arrive," persisted Gorki, "and, when the Soviet woman becomes a literary world type we shall have gone a long way towards full cultural realization. . . ."

From woman we went to war. Somebody asked if Soviet Russia in any circumstances would fight with a foreign power.

Gorki was emphatic in his answer. "We shall fight only if our territory is threatened, and then only when every avenue of mediation has been exhausted."

Japan was obviously in everybody's mind. "What," asked a delegate, "if she should menace Vladivostok?"

"If Japan attacks Vladivostok we shall defend," he answered, "but we shall negotiate through all possible channels before we fire a shot or launch a plane."

This is the general attitude of the Soviet people. I found no trace of militarist spirit, no desire for aggression. The idea of converting to Marxism by force of arms seems to have died with the expulsion of Trotsky. In the fullness of time the Soviet believes that mankind will follow its economic example, but there is not the vaguest notion of speeding up the happy day by high explosives.

We talked and talked—as only writing folk and Russians can—and late in the evening were taken to a big dining-room on the ground floor spread with

hospitable tables. The walls, painted a delicate blue, were decorated with studies of mountain scenes by Russian artists ; pictures, flowers and food invited us to sit down to a wonderful meal, utterly void of stiffness or ceremony. There were no set courses, succulent dishes unexpectedly and most deliciously appeared and were eaten haphazard. Caviare, roast chicken, bortsch and lobster, ice-cream and every kind of salad came in relays, and wine and vodka flowed like the Volga. It lent a special delight to the feast to feel that the delicacies we enjoyed were not beyond the reach of other Soviet citizens. Living is not only good but inexpensive in the U.S.S.R.

I sat next to Marshak and his brother, whose book on the Five Years' Plan has been translated into English. Next to him was a Professor of Science who drank my health in every brand of vodka over and over again. Relays of roast duck, stewed lamb in cabbage leaves, wonderful cakes, melons and grapes succeeded each other ; everyone talked and quite unexpectedly listened.

The conversation as in Tchekov became personal. The Russian can and does say the most amazingly intimate things about his inner life with the simplicity of a child.

A young poet with soft blue eyes and a heavy crop of fair hair leaned towards me.

"Tell me," he said earnestly, "what is your secret vice ?"

I thought hastily. Not possessing the frankness of the Slav, I shrank from throwing my special peccadilloes on the table as it were. I hedged discreetly.

"Gluttony," I said, bolting an olive.

"But that is not a vice," the poet looked fierce, "that is a bad habit. You do not think straight."

"And what is your vice ?" I asked, hoping to distract his attention.



"THE WALL NEWSPAPER"

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"I have a very bad one." His eyes looked agonised, he ran his hand through his hair with a gesture of hopelessness.

"Sometimes I am frightened of myself—you see, I am so hungry for life. I want so much to see, to know, to experience, that I feel sometimes I cannot give as much as I take."

"Materially do you mean ? "

"Oh, no—not that. I mean mentally, spiritually. I must not be greedy of sensation."

"You give it all back," I protested, "in your work and your life. . . . Selfish takers are rarely creative, you know."

He kissed my hand and drank more vodka. So did I. Marshak began to describe his experiences in England, pre-war, when Simple Lifers were the vogue and Edward Carpenter ran a colony of non-smokers, non-drinkers and non-meat-eaters.

"And you all wore sandals made of grass," said I, and reminded him of one poor disciple who fell asleep by a hedge and awoke to find the sheep had browsed upon his foot-gear and eaten it all away.

"You English are a bad people," he laughed. "Always you turn everything into a nursery tale."

About this time speeches began. The Russians, like all Slavs, are inveterate orators. At the Congress discipline kept each man or woman within an allotted span, the Presidential bell ringing if the limit were ignored. Here, however, there was no definite period, you spoke as long as you wanted to, or your audience would listen until a rival stood up and out-competed your efforts. Meanwhile, private conversation continued, punctuated with bursts of applause at appropriate moments. Chicken succeeded chicken; lobster followed lobster, five men told me about their souls, and the poet was reciting a sonnet when a clamour arose for "Comrade Count—a speech, a speech."

Here was an amazing anomaly. Who or what was Comrade Count in Soviet Russia ?

They were calling for Alexei Tolstoi, the famous novelist. One of the many *émigrés* who refused to give allegiance to the revolution, he had remained in exile until, gradually accepting Collectivist economics, he came back home to Russia. Lenin welcomed him with open arms ; contrary to general belief repentant intelligensia are always welcome, and at this moment he is one of the most popular men and authors in the U.S.S.R.

His colleagues, however, still chaffingly call him the Count, and in a white embroidered blouse, with his fine head and erect carriage, he looked a very courtly figure.

Tolstoi, after an eloquent address on men and books, sat down, and a member of the Central Soviet took his place. He gave a political speech—language is no bar to the recognition of the ministerial angle ; I could have forestalled all that he said—Karl Marx, Lenin, Stalin, the great triumvirate and their gospel !

But this was practically the only party outburst. The other speakers confined themselves to proposing healths. And then, just when the festivities paused, my little friend, Kwon-Lan-shi, stood up and told us in German what life was like for a Communist writer in her native country. A born orator, in her slim Chinese robe she was graceful as a willow wand. Her lovely hands fluttered like flower petals, her voice had the quality and the appeal of a child.

Kwon-Lan-shi had had an adventurous life. A student at Hankow, on the banks of the Yangtse—her voice took me back to the marvellous days and nights I had passed on the great river¹—she had joined the Reds and incurred the wrath of Chiang-Kai-shek who, originally an ardent supporter of

¹ *Young China and New Japan*. Harrap, 8/6 net.

Borodin, the Soviet Commissar, had subsequently joined the other side. Kwon-Lan-shi got off scot-free, but two of her friends, a woman author and a young poet who were found with some of Gorki's translations, were buried alive !

After Hankow came Germany, but at long last she had reached Moscow in time for the Writers' Congress, where at the invitation of the Union she will remain to write her experiences, to be translated into Russian.

Her speech, tragic and passionate, was tumultuously applauded, and so with fresh relays of food and more speeches the hours flowed on, until in complete surprise we found we were well into the small hours of the morning. By slow degrees we said farewell to Gorki and his charming niece and trailed into the garden.

The rain had cleared, and in the queer, dim light that precedes the dawning, the slender birches, touched with magic, stood like elfin spears guarding the green glades.

I found myself in a big car next to Aragon, the French poet who is on the staff of *L'Humanité*. We discussed, I remember, the wonderful evening in general and Soviet character in particular. Each of us persisted that the Russian was most akin to our own national temperament, in defiance of the law that opposites rather than complements attract. I have noticed that enthusiasm for foreigners a long way off frequently takes the form of claiming psychological affinity !

"The Chinese are so like us," says the American, English or French admirer. But no one insists on a resemblance between near-lying neighbours like English and Welsh, Russians and Poles ! . . .

The car stopped at the "Metropole." The night porter smiled a welcome—time did not exist in life—and full of happy recollections I fell asleep.

CHAPTER XII

“The writer is the engineer of the soul”—*Stalin*

THE “Metropole,” like most modern hotels, has a number of pretty girls in charge of cigarettes, postcards, periodicals, etc. In between the Congress meetings I made friends with some of them, my particular chum being Katrina, a bright, vivacious creature, permanently waved and beautifully manicured. Katrina worked eight hours a day for a five-day week, followed by a day off. Russia has abolished “name days”—you cannot tell Monday from Tuesday, Thursday from Friday, you may only determine where you are by the date! She lived at home with her people, contributing to the weekly exchequer from her earnings, and liked her work, indeed, had deliberately chosen it. She was an excellent linguist, speaking both English and French, and had the gift of making easy contacts. She would have earned a bigger salary as guide or interpreter with the Intourist Bureau. But the idea did not appeal to her.

“I don’t like rushing about with all sorts of strange folk,” she said. “I’m keen on meeting fresh people, but I like to be able to study them at leisure. Some of the foreign visitors say the funniest things. An English woman once asked me if Lenin had built the Kremlin. She’d no idea it dated back to the fourteenth century. Don’t you learn history in your country?”

I admitted that chronology was not a strong point in our national equipment.

“Now if she’d thought it was Peter the First, I

would have understood her dates being out, even by four centuries. To me the Kremlin always suggests Peter—strong and impregnable.”

“You admire him,” I asked.

“I adore the Alexei Tolstoi’s novel about him. He makes Peter live for you, the man’s strength of will, ruthlessness, domination and bestiality. He really did work for Russia. The only Tsar who ever cared a straw.”

Now *Peter the First*, one of the most brilliant novels of modern times, cannot be regarded as light fiction. The average young person, however, is equally selective in literary matters. Tretyakov, scholarly and fastidious, is read eagerly. Sholokov is another favourite, with *I Love*, the work of Avdeyenko, a young engineer from the shops.

Katrina and her colleagues dress prettily and go to cinemas and plays and dances two or three times a week. On other evenings they attend lectures on literature, the drama, or if their taste lies in such directions, economics, history—the choice is unending.

Envy is not a component part of Soviet youth’s psychology, for the reason that, given natural aptitude and the will to study, no career is barred. The heart-breaking question of means does not come in. You may, at the State’s expense, become a film artist, go on the stage, adopt politics, agriculture—opportunity is universal, nothing is denied. Only after unmistakable failure is a change of venue indicated.

For this reason natural selection comes happily into play, and without any heartburning you not only accept but glory in the niche you have decided to fill. This means the release of mental and emotional energy that in Russia of to-day finds expression in the discussion of ideas and general criticism.

I was present at several debates where the personnel of a factory, a farm, an engineering plant, etc., reviewed the work of a novelist who had chosen that particular environment as the background of his story. Occasionally the author had a rough time.

"The construction of your engine in Chapter II is technically wrong. . . . You've sown your winter corn too early. . . . No man would behave like your hero when he says good-bye to his girl. . . . Your analysis of motive doesn't hold water . . ." were but a few of the most salient hits. The "accused," however, for the most part faced the music with good-humour and gratitude.

Sometimes a manuscript is analysed before publication, when corrections and suggestions descend like hail on the author's head. Realising, however, that the sale of the book is dependent on its critical realism, most writing people run the gauntlet with becoming humility. More than that, the younger men and women, at any rate, put in some months each year on a farm or at constructional works or a naval or military depot, so that they may not lose touch with things as they are.

Even school children take to criticism like ducks to water—and some of their barbs are sharp-pointed.

It was at the Park of Culture and Rest that I found choice examples of juvenile satire in full flower. The Park is much more attractive than its name, really a delightful spot—a paradise for kiddies, with gymnasium, swimming pool, wide spaces for games and clever young teachers to organise them. Apart from the children's preserve, the park is like the Prater at Vienna, with merry-go-rounds, swings, giant racer, trick mirrors, and the rest. The Congress delegates were conducted thitherwards to receive a cultural welcome and see

a ballet. But I can never enjoy myself according to regulation, and once we had arrived I discreetly faded and joined the crowd—delightful people, who didn't understand a word I said, but gave me a cheery welcome ! A group of grotesques on stilts were circling round, wearing *papier mâché* bodies and heads and carrying placards which Boris, an English speaking comrade, translated for me. One figure in a girl's dress had a simpering face with downcast eyes ; another, a boy, wore a scowl and carried a toy pistol.

" They represent most authors' ideas of children," explained my informant, " according to the kiddies themselves. The placards say : ' You think we're like this, but we are not—see ! ' "

There was a fantastic ogling creature, all bows and ribbons, and an urchin dressed after the fashion of " Boy Blue." These also, it was suggested, were the figments of the writing brain :

" Like nothing on earth—Please note."

A deputation of young people told the foreign delegates and their Russian colleagues that they wanted stories of juvenile action, adventure, with plenty of wireless and aviation, and would the writers please not forget it.

I listened from the edge of the meeting, while my new acquaintance told me what was happening. Soviet children are an amazement. Fearless, well-mannered, self-confident and bubbling with fun, they are the happiest expression of New Russia.

I wandered off with Comrade Boris, who discussed modern conditions and the housing shortage.

He feared that not enough was being said as to the need of dwellings.

" It is necessary to be ruthless in our newspapers," he said quietly. " Facts must not be smothered."

When I recalled that on my last visit the whole

panoply of propaganda—Press, posters and wireless—had been necessary to stimulate public interest in what was going forward, I realised what a considerable distance Soviet mentality had travelled.

I had to leave Boris soon after this. The entire delegation, marching in column of route through the park, came round the corner, and the eagle eye of the poet Aragon spied me out. Leaping over the dividing railing he took me to my place in the ranks.

“Keep step !” he insisted. “Keep step ! You need discipline, my friend——”

Many people seem to think I needed the same thing, but somehow when we went into a vast open-air theatre, with tiers and tiers of seats and a huge stage, I got left over once again.

The theatre is an incredibly beautiful spot, looking out at one side on a graciously designed mansion, once a palace, now a museum, standing in a bevy of trees, through which one glimpses greensward. I was so lost in admiration that the delegates had passed to the seats reserved for them by the Union before I knew what had happened, and I realised that, a tiny unit in a sea of humanity, I'd lost my party and had nowhere to go. There wasn't a vacant place anywhere, and I was contemplating a retreat when a friendly voice shouted and a big man, rising to his feet, waved to me to join him in a row near the front, where the people squeezed up to make room for me.

Somehow my undisciplined divagations never meet their due penal reward. I ought by rights to have missed the entertainment, instead of which a most delightful experience awaited me. My rescuer was Korney Chukowski, a foremost literary critic, brilliant biographer of the Strachey school and author of the most lovely tales for children. He had realised I was a stray delegate and with the usual Russian kindness had proceeded to

“ save ” me. There are those who say I spend my life in being saved !

Chukowski is a devotee of Edward Lear's classics, Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, and Milne's *When we were very Young*.

“ But,” as he said at the Congress, “ what a falling off is here. In England the home of Children's Stories, where the genius of fun and fantasy bloomed to prodigious wealth in *The Walrus and the Carpenter*, *The Dong with the Luminous Nose* and *The Royal Slice of Bread*, the kiddies of to-day are fed with crudely coloured and inanely written ‘ strips ’ ! ”

Chukowski, like Marshak, who was his pupil, wrote before the revolution, though one of his most popular books, *Crocodile*, is of Soviet date. A public idol and known to everyone, admirers from all over the theatre perpetually tried to get near enough to shake his hand, and continually handed up bouquets of flowers—carnations, roses, gladioli—which he graciously shared with me, until it seemed as if we should be literally snowed under with blossoms. Flowers everywhere are accepted as tokens of friendship and regard. Four years ago you never saw them on the city streets, or in shops or stalls. To-day, huge baskets blaze with colour at the kerb and in the open markets.

In between the presentations—the performance was late in beginning—we exchanged views on literature. I listened to his musical voice with its perfect English with much pleasure. Alas ! English is rare in Moscow. On all sides you hear American, which though a remarkable and a noble language has an accent and pronunciation utterly unlike our own ! I asked Chukowski why Soviet students, business men, typists, workers spoke American—what had poor England done that her tongue should be so grievously contorted ?

His answer surprised and profoundly depressed me.

"English professors will not accept positions in our Universities," he said. "Perhaps it is a question of our politics—perhaps a more personal consideration."

A Soviet official gave me an even more disquieting reason. "Englishmen fear there will be no baths, no marmalade for breakfast, no roaring fires. The Americans are not so effeminate. They are prepared to rough it."

I protested that there were many brilliant young University men at home who would be delighted for the opportunity. But he did not seem impressed.

"You are a queer people, you English. You will go to the North Pole or Mount Everest and never turn a hair, but you are not so keen on new mental or spiritual experiences."

All the same, I am sure there must be a percentage of qualified teachers and lecturers who would welcome the chance of going to Russia, and I take this opportunity of explaining that "hot and cold" are included in the equipment of the latest flats and that the most fastidious palate will find comfort and delight in the Soviet cuisine.

As it is, we are steadily losing contact with a country of 180,000,000 people which in course of time will become one of the world's greatest markets, but instead of reacting to English goods, English culture and English literature, the whole current of Soviet sympathy turns to the States. American is taught with a nasal emphasis which must be difficult for the open-throated Russian to acquire.

"English is *bourgeois*," a pretty young stenographer remarked—I could only understand her with difficulty—"American is democratic."

Americans edit the magazines published by V.O.K.S., the Russian section of the Society of Cultural Relations, of which there is a

branch in this country, and translate English articles into their own tongue. Occasionally you meet a young Russian with a lovely intonation. But this is as rare as a native teacher of our language. . . .

Over the theatre there crept the grey mist of twilight. Arc lamps lit up the stage, the entertainment opened, and a selection of actors proceeded to speak their piece. An old tragedian with all the mannerisms of his type the world over recited Pushkin, a young modern gave a pleasing rendering from a recent play, and finally a troop of children ran down to the footlights and did a delightful scene from *The Fly's Wedding*, interpolated with shouts for Chukowski.

He had to yield at last and after a strenuous ten minutes, during which the kiddies swarmed over him, returned, hedged round with floral offerings.

Darkness suddenly swooped on us, and in a breathless hush, a display of fireworks began. Set piece succeeded set piece against the beautiful old palace. The people—five thousand men, women and children—clapped and shouted and laughed and finally burst into song. The excitement calmed down with the last Catherine wheel, and the beginning of the ballet.

It was a lovely scene; the dancers in national costumes from the Ukraine, Baku, the Far East, whirled in that ecstasy of motions which, disciplined to a hair's breath, is the soul of the Russian ballet. The evening wore on, the mist grew thicker, the figures on the stage had a magical significance.

A reporter from *Pravda* climbed over four seats and insisted he must interview Chukowski. It needed Herculean strength to get disentangled from the dense sea of humanity, but somehow it was effected. Chukowski was interviewed and sketched. I was interviewed and sketched. And

then we found a car and drove through the Moscow streets across the river and past the Kremlin, looking down with an aloof serenity at the eager swift-moving human tide that rushed past its massive walls—a new, an unbelievable Moscow. . . .

I wanted desperately to talk over my impressions and discoveries, but when I reached the hotel the rest of the party had gone to bed, and, realising I was very hungry, I went to the coffee room—you may eat at any hour of the night in Moscow—to discover I had lost my food ticket, without which a meal could not be obtained. The long-suffering official who looked after me in this direction had already made good three previous defalcations, and I had not the heart to worry him again. Equally I was determined not to go to bed hungry. I wanted to eat and eat I would.

I rang the bell and waited. Restaurant service has wonderfully improved, but it is still a case of *seychass*, i.e., presently, every now and then. The comrade who at last appeared was kind, but slow and incapable of interpreting my explanation as to the lost ticket. If he had understood he could have done nothing. Food vouchers at the “Metropole” cannot be dispensed with. He handed me the menu—*Bortsch* with cream and all sorts of delicious trimmings, ducklings, salad, ices and grapes. My mouth watered ; I could have eaten the table. And then I had an inspiration. My ticket for the day had vanished, but to-morrow’s supply was intact, and it was after midnight ! I handed him the coupon for my next day’s dinner and he took it like a lamb. I enjoyed my lobster and my vodka, which at fifteen kopecks a time cannot be considered a dear drink, even though only three shillings and ninepence go to a rouble.

I was joined later by Lan-shi, who gave me the prettiest greeting in amazingly pidgin-English and told me that she was broadcasting her experi-

ences in China and Berlin the next day. Her friend, a Chinese student, would translate into Russian and an American would officiate at the microphone for transmission to England. I don't suppose it ever got through! Moscow broadcasts rarely reach England, though they include a number and variety of subjects quite outside politics—the latest developments in Air Traffic, the progress of Artic Exploration; scientific discoveries; the crossing of wheat, apples, pears; subjects all of them likely to appeal to the man in the street, but all of them switched off whether by alien atmospherics or censorship—who shall say?

Soviet broadcast programmes are really admirable. The concerts are good and choral singing from the Ukraine, where the velvet basses come from, is frequently relayed. Propaganda rarely raises its reptile head, crooning has not yet impinged on national taste and jazz is only moderately included. The trouble is that the general admiration for America covers Republican Art, and because the States jazz the Soviets are beginning to feel they should jazz also. The same influence is creeping into their films which hitherto have shown no trace of cheapness.

With the stabilisation of the economic system, the increase of produce and improvement in distribution, the tension of life has been slackened. The Government no longer scourges with threats and warnings but encourages its citizens to take things more easily. It is felt that the country may afford to be less strenuous and in place of Tractor Starved Farms and Harassed Factories, film producers are encouraged to deal with lighter themes.

The *première* of the first of the Joyous Films was attended by Congress delegates, politicians, personalities and the general public. The story opened charmingly. A man with a magic flute

played so perfectly that, like the Pied Piper, every living thing ran after him—children, old women, young men and maidens, pigs and cows, rabbits and dogs, made up a vast procession. It was a fantasy after my own heart. But, alas, Hollywood had to be included—and a pseudo Hollywood at that. By which I mean that the jazz band and the queer contorted instruments and blarings which the “Jolly Boys” collected in their journeyings would not have been tolerated on any American set. Outrageously vulgar ballrooms, nightmares of *bourgeois* parties—without the touch of magic that makes a nightmare fascinating—chased each other across the screen. Bathrooms, speak-easies, the whole world of slapstick without a remnant of Charlie Chaplin.

I hated the film and felt very gloomy, as did a Dutch delegate—a modern novelist who had put in a year at the Moscow International Printing Works.

All the beauty and the truth, the force of the Soviet films that had made them world famous was lacking. What was to be done about it ?

We need not have worried. Next morning we were interviewed by the Press and our criticism and complaints were splashed in headlines, an inquest on the “Jolly Boys” was held, and the consensus of opinion being against it, a repetition of its imported inanity seemed improbable.

But that is one of the really helpful things about the Soviet. You are not expected to praise—you are asked for intelligent criticism. And it is listened to.

On the other hand, I was shown the private view of perhaps the most moving picture Russia has yet produced—*Three Songs of Lenin*. It shows the influence of the revolution in those Eastern Republics when women still wore veils and grew up as beasts of burden. First the veil disappears ; then the solitary labour on the arid earth under a

parching sun gives place to a cheerful working party in a well kept farm with irrigation and modern agricultural methods. Throughout the scene comes the mournful lilt of a song old as slavery, which gradually merges into a triumphant phase instinct with liberation.

The second part shows the building up of the new Moscow, its factories and flats and teeming Co-operatives ; lastly, the great Leader's funeral is projected, with vast crowds following the coffin, trooping like an endless army to the Mausoleum, where Lenin lies. The photography is perfect, the handling of the crowds masterly, but beyond and above all technical excellence is the impression the picture conveys of spiritual awakening and emotional quickening, the striving of the soul of the Soviet.

The pilgrimage to the great man's tomb is never ending. Every evening, from five to seven, the gates of the Mausoleum are unlocked and the huge waiting queue moves forward. I joined the throng on a windy afternoon. The sun had set angrily, leaving a glow in the sky which seemed to spread all over the Red Square. A vast, imposing space, the Square enshrines the most salient national memories, past and present. The cupolas of St. Basil, the ancient home of the Greek Church, rise almost by the side of the clean stark lines which mark the Soviet Temple that enshrines the earthly remnants of the flaming Soul that destroyed Old Russia and incarnated the New.

I passed through the gates, up a wide flight of steps by the great doors, with their military guard, into a black marble vestibule, miraculously lit. Down a long marble staircase, across a floor, down again until you reach the glass case which holds the slender figure of Lenin in khaki, lying like a saint in a shrine. The face looked very small, very tired, and curiously childlike.

The whole atmosphere was charged with reverence. I felt I was in a cathedral and instinctively waited for the pealing of the organ, the burning of incense, the low voice of an intoning priest.

Once past the shrine you ascend a staircase and exit by a door on the other side of the building, thus enabling a constant flow of worshippers to come in and go out. The whole setting is instinct with religious mysticism. The people stand in hushed adoration—as though expectant of a miracle.

This was not the only occasion when the religious element in Soviet official life seemed to me predominant. A few days later I was waiting in the Theatre Platz, outside the "Metropole," for an opportunity to cross the road when a long stream of cars, soldiers, airmen, mechanics in overalls, peasants and workers generally, surged round the corner. I never can resist a crowd, and tagging on to the tail, found myself once more in the Red Square. The entrance was railed off on this occasion, and only those with tickets were admitted. I remembered, however, the special reverence in which the Soviet holds a writer, and producing my delegate's badge, was immediately admitted and given a seat in the grand stand. It was the celebration of a new type of tractor recently completed, and members of the Central Soviet and other distinguished people had assembled to welcome the long caterpillars of shining steel. The Reception Committee sat on a raised platform, as I feel the Popes and Archimandrites of the Tsarist regime must have sat when on some public occasion they proclaimed a blessing on the people. The tractors in effect *were* blessed, though saluting drums took the place of the censers and massed bands represented the choir. But the ceremonial, with its fervour and ecstasy, was in essence the same thing.



ERNST TOLLER AND OTHER DELEGATES

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As a writer, I was always given preferential treatment on the status of my craft. From the day that the ill-fated R.A.P.P. died and Stalin made his famous declaration, the whole of Russia has acclaimed the power of the pen.

"The writer," said Stalin, "is the engineer of the soul."

The pronouncement ran like fire throughout the country. A new aspect of the literary man came into being. Engineers, as we all know, are the gods of Soviet efficiency, who achieve miracles of productive skill. An engineer of the soul is almost, if not quite, as wonderful as the other kind. The mention of the word "soul," however, has its difficulties. A young, prosaic and bewildered speaker at the Congress, Chairman of a Factory Literary Group, asked for guidance on the point.

"I accept what our great Leader says," he faltered, "but when I looked up the word 'soul' in the Soviet Encyclopedia, it said—'soul—abolished by Karl Marx.'"

He was greeted by such shouts of laughter that he retired hurt. Presumably the next edition of the national work of reference will record the resurrection of the soul by Stalin.

Sex—unlike the soul—seems to have found its right place in the Soviet scheme of things, neither under-estimated nor over-emphasised. It is not stressed in life, literature, drama or the Press. There are no sex novels as such and the love theme is sparingly used. The attitude towards degeneracy, male or female, is one of rigid puritanism. Acts of homo-sexualism are severely punished, offenders being liable to eight years' imprisonment in Siberia.

Divorce in excess is regarded as anti-social, those who make more than two attempts at matrimony being considered bad at their job! The economic

factor does not enter into the relations of husband and wife, as both can be self-supporting, a financial arrangement that tends to increase domestic stability.

It is impossible to decide at first glance if a woman be married or single. Wedding rings are rarely worn and, as a rule, wives use their own names.

No child is born under a social slur, in the U.S.S.R. a father is a father and compelled to contribute to the upkeep of his children to the extent of a third of his income, whether married to the mother or no. This law, as I discovered when last in Russia, works in favour of monogamy. Where a man has had two or three families, the respective mothers must appeal to the Courts for a decision as to their respective allotments, and the consequent proceedings create such a scandal that a feeling against too free divorce has arisen. Women who prefer to have a baby without a husband, usually arrange pecuniary details privately.

But though the love child shares a full heritage with the rest, there still remains an inevitable sense of loss. To be without a father in the home means a big gap in a young life. It is not from school-fellows or local gossips that any hurt comes. Youth feels the pinch in the lack of that masculine indulgence and control which is the parental privilege. A man's rest day is usually spent with his family. They all go to the Park in the evening, or the pictures. But the boy or girl who knows only mother-love has no such joys.

I tried to put the case for the child to Tretyakov, who is an ardent feminist. He thinks that the Soviet type of woman adumbrated by Gorki will be the new matriarch; of superb physique, brilliant intellect, she will have an unassuageable appetite for experience.

"She will inevitably have a child," he insisted, "and so complete herself. But this completion will not depend on a permanent alliance with a man. She may take him as a husband, she may regard him as a friend, turn to him as a lover. But to me the woman of the future, the woman who will typify our country in all its strength, courage and sweetness, though she may admit marriage, will be independent of it."

"You may be the creator of the Soviet type," I suggested. His sensitive face flushed.

"I may try," he said quietly.

Tretyakov has a delightful wife and a brilliant daughter, and they both adore him. The latter speaks good English and her father likes her to translate for him, though he has such a fastidious knowledge of the language himself that it is sometimes a meticulous task. They live in a small flat in one of the busiest centres of Moscow, where he writes in a little room lined with books and some beautiful Chinese models of stage characters.

He spoke of his admiration for the Soviet woman of the future, the completion of feminine youth to-day—strong to suffer, eager to sacrifice, for ever learning and giving. His daughter seized his hand and wrung it hard.

"If we could be like that," she said enthusiastically.

Nineteen years of age, she is training as an aeroplane designer, working in the schools and the shops all day, studying at night. One of the friendliest and most delightful girls I have ever met, she has a complete sympathy with her own generation and a marvellous understanding of the women of a previous era, whose maturity was reached in the turmoil of the revolution. Keen-brained, ambitious—not in the personal but in the Soviet sense—she is rooted in the simple deep affections of her home and the understanding and

sympathy between her and her parents is very beautiful.

"If I ever do anything worth while," she said, "I should call my design after my mother," and she put her arm round Tretyakova's slender shoulders.

In England Tatiana would probably have been relegated to an office, her talents leashed to other people's correspondence, the keeping of books, the administration of a staff. A career as air designer, who could pour life and movement into wood and metal, would have been impossible. How could a modest author find the money for training? where is the firm who would engage a young girl for such a post?

But in the Soviet to youth all things are possible, and this fair-haired enthusiast may go far in the service of the air and of her country. It makes one feel a little dizzy sometimes to realise that, equally with the child of cultured parents, the child of the most ignorant peasant, the most unskilled worker, has the whole world of opportunity wherein to choose. Here are no thwarted geniuses, no crushed hopes. Like an arrow youth may make for its goal—borne on the wings of choice, unhampered by crippling considerations of pence.

Fearless of criticism, secure of the present, confident of the future, for the first time in history youth stands free!

CHAPTER XIII

Moscow of the Moment

THE Congress lasted a fortnight and the interest remained at the same tension all the time. The audience indeed were as stimulating as the speakers, while the delegations who kept on popping in and out were amazing. Workers from vast distances would turn up, bearing all sorts of produce, and having presented the platform with fruit, flowers and vegetables, examples of engineering skill, weaving or what not, would proceed to testify to the Congress as to the whole duty of an author, their criticisms covering the entire literary field from questions of style to the choice of subject. Any lingering idea that Soviet public opinion is standardised was completely routed. They were no respecters of persons, these peasants and factory hands—poets, dramatists and leader writers were all dealt with by young and old alike.

The group that pleased me best arrived in overalls, carrying huge lengths of steel tubing. They got mixed up somehow with a committee from the village of Palekh, the traditional home of the ikon painters, whose exquisite art is known all over the world. The Soviet has protected the delicate talent of this famous coterie handed from father to son for many generations, and though pictures of historic interest, portraits of famous men and women have replaced the studies of saints and angels, the genius of Palekh still remains. But whereas, economically speaking, the colony used to be dependent on the art dealer, who fixed his

own price, nowadays they market their own pictures through a Co-operative Society, which also safeguards their individual interests. The majority make a good income and live quite well.

The men of Palekh, bearing aloft a portrait of Stalin, cannoned against the tubing giants and for a moment there was a block in the traffic. Eventually the artists drew back, but the steel workers, not to be outdone, gave them right of way until, in a torrent of laughter, the respective leaders mounted the rostrum arm in arm, to the huge delight of everybody. Between the sessions the delegates were shown the sights—factories, cathedrals, clinics, schools, all the ramifications of the city's life. Usually, however, I evaded these expeditions. I wanted to explore Moscow on my own, to find my way—or lose it—in the network of streets and among the people who in their kindness and generosity took me to their hearts. Each excursion was a fresh chapter in a tale of adventure, but wherever I went, whatsoever doubt or difficulty I encountered, a hospitable hand was always there to guide me. . . .

Moscow to-day is bustling, well kept and thriving. Up-to-date motor-buses, trams and taxis try ineffectually to cope with vast crowds of pedestrians who festoon every available vehicle in human garlands, night and morning. An underground railway, however, is being built and "tubes" are also on the way, so that in a few years the congestion will probably only equal that of London in the rush hours.

Housing like transport lags behind demand. It is indeed impossible to keep up with the ever-increasing stream of humans from the provinces. Pre-war, the capital had a population of two millions, which according to the latest figures has increased to four and a half. New buildings are springing up on every side, modern in style but

with a personality and distinction that does not clash with the architectural glories of the old regime. Apart from the fabulous beauty of its palaces—mostly museums—and its cathedrals, Moscow externally resembles one of our provincial towns. The Co-operative Stores, though far more attractive than in 1930 when beef and buttons, hams and hats were all mixed up, are still a little crude in window dressing and cannot compare with the shop windows of say Birmingham, though they are equal to the “ Co-ops ” of Oldham, Wigan and other Lancashire centres.

The women are comfortably clad in a diversity of styles—dress standardisation has entirely vanished—but their costumes lack chic, the cut is bad and does not do justice to the Russian figure. Clothing stores have grown apace and under a perpetual press fusillade have speeded up output and increased choice. New models are continually advertised and mannequin displays arranged. But as yet ready-to-wear garments are miles behind the standard of production in the States, where smart garments are available for all sizes and occasions. The trade, however, is being reorganised under American advice and possibly the next time I go over I shall find Bond Street effects have been achieved and surpassed.

A decade of manufacturing enterprise in Western Europe is achieved within a Soviet twelve month !

Prices are by no means uniform. Special stores at cheap rates are run for the lowest paid proletariat—unskilled workers who earn about sixty roubles a month. This class of the community has other privileges. The children have free meals at school and house rent is reduced considerably. Any notion that every citizen should receive the same wage irrespective of capacity has been sent to limbo, and ability claims its rent. All the

devices of Capitalism are employed, slogans, speeding up, rewards and rivalry are part and parcel of the Soviet programme. If a business does not pay it is reconstructed or shut down. Every factory, farm or plant owned by the State or by a Co-operative Society publishes a balance sheet which must justify the capital absorbed and the energy expended. The vital and fundamental difference between the U.S.S.R. and the rest of the world is that it is a criminal offence to exploit the labour of others—he that does not work neither shall he eat. This, however, does not mean the suppression of beggars, though to-day, generally speaking, only old people ask for alms.

To-day an ever-increasing number of enterprises, productive and distributive, are run on collectivist principles, and side by side with State ownership and State control you find co-operative ownership with elected direction. There are, for example, both State and Co-operative Hotels, while the food trade is almost entirely run by wholesale and retail Co-operative Societies. These buy and sell at prices fixed by a Control Board, which allows for a margin of profit not exceeding one and a half to two per cent according to the market supply. The profits are divided among the employees of the Society, who may also be shareholders and receive interest on their investments. In addition, the Trade Union rates of wages are paid, so that the total income of the co-operative worker is quite comfortable.

People are also encouraged to accumulate bank balances for which they receive 7 per cent interest, or to invest in Government loans at the same rate. A big bank balance no longer invites suspicion, and you need not fear neighbourly condemnation if you refurnish your home, break out into new paint or purchase a car. The supply of the latter is not yet equal to requirements, though the

Moscow Works employ over 30,000 men. Until saturation point is reached car ownership—apart from authors and journalists—is confined to the *udarniks* or shock workers. Generally speaking, this particular prize packet is a member of the Communist Party, which though only two million strong—membership is reserved for those who can trace their descent from pure proletarian stock for three generations—ginger up the entire population.

Highly trained, mechanically, and scientifically, with a thorough grounding in economics and a knowledge of foreign languages, the Party spreads through every department of Soviet life. Pledged to the national service and to a bare subsistence level, like the Jesuits they are at the call of their superiors, and may be sent at a moment's notice to the most outlying post of the Union, to Siberian snows or tropical heats. The Communist Party are vowed to a denial of God—though they seem to practise the Christian virtues of selflessness and sacrifice unceasingly. Outside the Party, no such relinquishment is demanded.

The shock workers are record breakers in every department. If the scheduled output of a plant be, say 1000 tons a month, the *udarniks* will tear out their hearts to deliver the supply in a fortnight—driving their fellow workers to a frenzy of effort by sheer will power. Permission to run a car is after all small compensation for such ferocious energy, more especially as the conscientious shock worker will probably use his prize to get more quickly to his post. It is the Communist Party that has rushed the country out of its rut of inefficient distribution and bad timing. They are the charioteers who set the pace, the rest of the population breathlessly follow.

Slackness in factories, workshops and all labour centres is dealt with by a committee of workers elected by their fellows. Here, the spirit of

competition once more comes into play. If the output of a department falls short of the rest, an enquiry is held and Ivan, Serge and the rest are hauled over the coals as to the reason for decline in production. It is not enough for a workman to admit that he has been going slow. The Committee must know why. Does he drink too much ? Eat too much ? Go too often to the pictures or the play ? How has his interest been deflected ? His whole life is reviewed, his psychological reactions examined, the mental, emotional or physical cause for the decline in the average *must* be discovered, and if possible, put right. Mere human dislike of effort, the longing for a jog-trot life, will not be accepted. If the culprit or culprits will not mend their ways, they are axed—deprived of their Trade Union tickets and sent workless away until such time as they truly repent and are reinstated, or get a fresh job in a district where labour is at such a premium that Union tickets are not asked for !

Piece-work is universal. Karl Marx, who denounced it as a device of the Capitalist devil, on this point has been overthrown. In these conditions competition flourishes—competition and inquests are common to the whole of Russia ; school children, peasants, politicians—yes, even politicians—probe their own and other people's souls to the quick. In this way public opinion largely takes the place of the police. People occasionally drink more than is good for them. That is their own affair, and so long as they carouse after working hours or on their free day, nobody worries. But if a man or woman tipples at their job or becomes obstreperous in the street, a storm of obloquy descends on them. They are not giving the Soviet a square deal—out on them as bad citizens.

Public opinion is also relied on to enforce the regular payment of rent and other social debts—

not, however, with equal success. There are still congeries of slums in Moscow, tumble-down houses with bug-ridden rooms crowded with teeming humanity. Conditions are no worse than those in parts of Bethnal Green, Westminster and Nottingdale, and in the eighteenth-century human kennels of Newcastle-on-Tyne, which still remain standing. The difference lies in the active policy which consistently demolishes the plague spots and erects decent habitations, and the *laissez-faire* of our own bodies, which do little but talk !

Rent collection in the Soviet slums is not easy. The tenants, mostly unskilled, earn comparatively small wages, and many remain in arrear. In the yard that adjoins most tumble-down tenements the authorities erect their boards—one black, the other red. On the first are written the names of the defaulters, the second is reserved for the good and punctual payers. Every one reads and marks, small children shout offensive epithets after the discredited tenants, some of the adults follow suit.

“Serge hasn’t paid his rent for two months.”

“Markoff owes two weeks . . . Olga’s on the black board. Yah ! Olga ! Who’s a cheat !”

Alas ! however, neither the children nor the black board always have the required effect. Slum defaulters too often remain defaulters until they are taken to court and told they must pay up or be ejected !

Housing operations are undertaken by Co-operatives. To secure a modern flat of three to five rooms, with bath and kitchen, you must join a society and take shares—from two to five hundred roubles. Your money remains in the concern at interest, and when the flats are complete, you pay a comparatively high rent, say two hundred roubles monthly. It must be remembered, however, that the total earnings of a household average much more than in Capitalist countries. The

provision of day nurseries and school meals sets the mother free to work if she so wishes, as the vast majority do.

There is, however, a considerable difference in the standard of living between the skilled and the unskilled worker, as I found in my excursions among the back alleys of the city, where I enjoyed some delightful episodes.

On one occasion I went out in the hope of buying some common or garden pins. I visited various stores known as "Torgsin," where foreign money is accepted, and searched the long narrow counters heaped untidily with goods, but not a pin could I discover. Still undefeated, I went into the National Co-operatives, but here, also, was the same dearth of these small but useful objects. I managed, however, with the help of pantomime to explain what I was seeking, and with many giggles a pretty girl assistant inscribed the word "pins" in Russian. Thus armed, I returned to the streets, and presented my paper to all and sundry. But, alas! I had no luck. Every one shook their heads and pointed vaguely in the distance.

What, I wondered, had become of all the pins in Russia? Had they some peculiar *bourgeois* significance, was it contra-revolutionary to ask for them? The mystery deepened. Young and middle-aged, male and female, I questioned them all, but inevitably drew blank.

And then a dear old granny came round the corner of the street. She was wearing a black shawl, and a white kerchief draped her head. I turned towards her eagerly and held out the paper. She read it, and with a wide smile, put her hand in mine in a protective fashion and led me through narrow streets to a dilapidated house, up a dark flight of stairs to a small room with a truckle bed, an oil lamp and a table with a loaf of bread and a

bowl of potatoes. The floor was bare and uneven, the window curtainless, the air close and stuffy. But beside the beaming smile of the old woman, these things did not count. She went to a large wooden box and took out a wicker basket, from which she produced a packet of pins, and with a kindly pat on my shoulder, handed me five !

I subsequently discovered that pins can only be obtained at establishments dedicated to the sale of paper, pens and ink, etc.—which lends an additional eminence to the writing craft.

I visited other homes like my old friend's, void of table crockery, cooking apparatus or means for washing. The older generation have only the most rudimentary ideas of comfort. It is not alone that their means of existence are small, but that their standard of requirements is limited. They are still linked up to the old regime of dirt and squalor, and while their children forge ahead in mental and physical development, they remain stay put.

There is another reason why the standard of physical well-being, even among the best paid Soviet workers, is lower than our own. It is a part of the national psychology for good or ill to be less concerned with things material than things spiritual. The endurance of the Russian is proverbial. The lean years of the Soviet evolved a nation nourished on bread and tea. With things of the mind or of the soul it is a different matter. The workers may live in conditions at which an English artisan would turn up his nose, but their eagerness for ideas extends to every kind of public lecture and discussion, the cinema and the theatre.

Both in theme and in production, the general average of the movies reaches a much higher level of vitality and interest than our own. Stage and films engage some of the keenest brains, the most experimental talent in the country. Both arts are

progressing, stagnation and repetition are too hotly criticised to be possible.

General interest in things national is at a high pitch. At any kind of collective demonstration—a review, an air pageant, a literary congress—the people come in their thousands, no matter what the weather. On one particularly drenching day there was a Flying Fête in which hundreds of boys and girls took part. From the roof of the aerodrome, far as the eye could reach, I looked down on a sea of spectators. Keen, responsive, eager, they stood and were soaked to the skin! Mackintoshes were scarce, umbrellas existed not at all. There are, indeed, no umbrellas in Moscow. Those who wish to remain dry fold newspapers about their heads, after the fashion of cocked hats. The wet, however, did not damp the enthusiasm. Between the showers—there were some sunshiny spells—*Maxim Gorki*—the giant plane—sailed into view, with some forty or fifty young parachutists standing on the wings. Roar after roar of applause greeted the slim athletic figures waiting the signal to jump. Fearless and exultant, they leapt into the air, dropping, dropping, until, as by a miracle, the parachutes, red, blue, violet and green, opened above them and they landed safely. Over and over again the human freight cast off without a tremor, some, indeed, waiting all but a breath too long before they pulled the cord!

It was a cheery though a damp pageant. All sorts of interesting folk were at the aerodrome. Towering above the crowd was Professor Schmidt, leader of the *Chelyusnik* expedition to the Arctic. Big, bearded, with deep blue eyes and a voice like a bell, the Professor told us of those interminable three months when, wrecked on an ice floe, the party remained marooned. It was a ghastly time. Food ran short, so did fuel, and clothing gave out almost completely, while the

chance of rescue became tragically less as the weeks went on. It must have seemed eternity before the Soviet Air Force, in the teeth of shuddering peril, made an heroic rescue.

"But we never lost our morals," said the Professor. "We learnt a great deal on board the *Chelyusnik*, but more than anything else, I think, we learnt to realise the intense significance of the written word. We had a small library aboard—some classics and a few modern authors. No, I won't give you the names of those, it was by sheer chance they were selected. Our greatest possession was a volume of Pushkin's poems. We read each verse aloud—turn and turn about—to the whole ship's company, over and over again. We used to discuss the poet's appeal to each of us individually—our reactions, our thoughts. We were not all familiar with all Pushkin, and generally the most striking commentaries came from those who heard him for the first time. We forgot cold, hunger and anxiety in these talks, which always produced something new and stimulating. Gradually, every one of us joined in. And then some of the company began to write down their thoughts and impressions in verse form. Others tried their hand at prose. A group began to compile a collective story of the *Chelyusnik*. The rest of us criticised and analysed. We became keen on word delineation; we developed a knowledge of psychology, an understanding of the human soul. . . . But for Pushkin and his inspiration, I don't know what would have happened to us."

"Collective" writing is very popular in the U.S.S.R. One school of enthusiasts insisted, indeed, that group handling of creative art is most effective, and as a result a number of collective novels were submitted—but not published. Gorki, as President of the Union, ruled that works of the imagination cannot properly be included in the

category of mass production—style being more important than Soviet sentiments.

The vogue for "group" drawing, however, has definitely caught on. The most brilliant caricatures in the Russian Press are the work of three artists. Each makes a sketch of the same model, then the three are compared and the most effective "lines" lifted for the composite picture. That afternoon I met the "group" and enquired how the "lines" were chosen.

"By a majority of two," replied the youngest of the trio. "Very often we disagree—and go on disagreeing all night. In the end, one of us gives in and we're all happy."

Everybody joined in the discussion, airmen, waitresses carrying tea and cakes, students, peasants in top-boots and blouses, up from the country for the day. The rain pelted on, but nobody heeded, and presently the discussion drifted from literature to leadership. Had the shipwreck discovered any unsuspected genius of command?

"The emergency should always find the man," said the Professor, "but then, on the *Chelyusnik* we were all leaders in turn."

"That," said a Turkish delegate, "is not possible. Leaders are born not made."

The statement created a sensation.

"That's Fascism," cried a young mechanic. "When you believe that you hand yourself over to caste dictatorship."

"Surely everyone has the ability to lead in some channel or another," said the Professor. "Given the chance of expression, it must develop."

"Do you suggest that anyone could develop into a Lenin?" argued the delegate.

"There have been men as great as Lenin who never had the chance to lead. Circumstances must affect opportunity. Lenin would still have been a leader had he died in prison—but the world



"PEASANTS AND WORKERS"

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would not have felt his influence. . . . The trouble to-day, I think, is that what I should call 'leaderism' as distinct from leadership has become fashionable. Any self-seeking individual or careerist eager for prominence, with elastic principles and a platform manner, can get a following. But leaderism rarely suffers or sacrifices. That is reserved for leadership." He is an amazing personality, the Professor. He held a University Readership under the Tsar, but joined the revolution in 1917, and with Stanislawsky of the Moscow Arts Theatre was among the first to accept Lenin's invitation to the intelligensia to help the Government.

It is one of the paradoxes of the U.S.S.R. that while individualism has been ruthlessly stamped out, individuality flourishes and is encouraged. People are not rigidly labelled or pigeon-holed. It is possible to be an Air Marshal and a research chemist, or you may write novels and manage a farm. I realised this very pleasantly after the Air Pageant. As by a miracle the sky cleared and I went for a long walk past the Opera House to an outlying suburb. People were crowding home from work, queueing up for the cinemas, filling the eating houses. I had a desire to go into a co-operative dining-room and was deliberating how to get there when a good-looking young man in overalls, who had spotted my Congress card, asked in good English if I were a foreign delegate.

"I'd like to talk to you," he said. "Will you have some food with me?"

We went together into a big busy room, with long tables roughly laid, but crammed with people. He produced a dinner ticket and ordered soup and meat, which after a little while duly arrived—well cooked and hot.

"I am a musician—a composer," he told me, "and I write for the films."

I glanced at his overalls.

" Oh, yes," he said proudly, " I am an engineer, too. I love my work, but it does not absorb all my energies. There are some things I cannot express in engines—the miracles of beauty that are happening every day. I wrote some songs, words and music, for our wall newspaper, which were liked so much that our committee decided I should study composition. Last year I had six months' musical and literary training, and I completed a film scenario, with musical settings. They have all been bought. I enjoyed every minute of the experience, but at last I felt the urge to get back to the shops, so I returned to my old job. . . . It is the ideal life to me—keeping in touch with reality so that your imagination can't run away with you, and then translating your impression into words and sounds."

" What will you do ultimately ? "

" I never make plans," he said. " You see there's no need for that. The future has no fears for any of us. There's opportunity for all . . . Perhaps I shall concentrate on creative work. I've always wanted to write a symphony of the air . . . It's not been done yet."

He was getting married in the spring, he told me, to a young udarnik who had speeded up the output at a State Farm so successfully that 75 per cent of the corn tax had been delivered three months ahead of the scheduled time! She was being sent to a motor factory in Moscow, and he was awaiting anxiously the completion of the co-operative flats where they were to live. He asked me many questions as to English industrial life. The aspect that I think shocked and surprised him most keenly was the fact of youthful unemployment. It seemed to him incredible that thousands of young people should grow up without the chance or hope or discipline of work.

"It's terrible," he said, and stared at me with grave, almost horrified, eyes. There are certain things in the Capitalist system which to the Russian of to-day seem lunatic. That a State should be prepared to feed or half feed the workless and make no effort to turn their energy to productive account is beyond their comprehension, even the old Capitalist axiom, that production should be for profit rather than for use, cannot explain it.

"It's—waste," said the young man, "sheer waste ! . . ."

The streets of Moscow were a perpetual tonic to me. Every day brought a fresh contact. On one occasion, hopelessly lost in the side streets off Petrovsky, I was rescued by a young girl. I wanted to find the *Moscow Daily News*, but had neglected to bring the address in Russian though the paper itself supplied the Slav title. No one knew where it was, but at last a fair-haired creature with an enchanting smile took me to the Post Office and looked up the telephone directory, where she discovered the address. A postal employee escorted me to the place, only to find it was the printing works and that the editorial department was far away ! No one spoke any English at the works, but by waving a copy of the paper and giving a pantomime display of "writing," I was able to convey what I wanted, and I was handed over to the printer's devil, in this case an aged and rheumatic woman who took proofs to the editorial department as they came off the machines. We dawdled through one of the many pleasant little parks that freshen the suburban streets, ate sunflower seeds and agreed in dumb show that it was quicker to walk than to wait for a tram.

We arrived at last at the office of the *Moscow Daily News*. Printed in English the paper is admirably written and full of news—with literary,

social and political articles of special interest. The paper is issued daily—except on Fridays, as we should name it—as the entire staff, printing, publishing and editorial take their free day on Thursday ; other papers like *Pravda* and *Isvestia* (*Truth* and the *News*) arrange their free day in shifts. Borodin, the Editor, was, at Sun Yat-sen's request, sent to China in 1927 to help in the formation of a National Government. He successfully established the Communist system on the Yangtze, where it still remains in being, indeed, but for the defection of Chiang Kai-shek it might have spread throughout South China. Borodin, however, was not in Moscow, so I saw Axelrod, the Assistant Editor, who speaks beautiful English and has a wide knowledge of European affairs ; he was elected Commissar at the putative Communist rising in Bavaria, and only managed by great good luck to escape with his life.

A very gentle-mannered man with a soft voice and sensitive hands, it is in the steady steel of his eyes that you sense his strength. Like most Soviet publicists, he was refreshingly easy of access and gave me every kind of information as to Russian popular taste in films and plays. There has been, it seems, a general desire for less propaganda and more drama in the theatre, and playwrights, like novelists, have had to turn from sermonising on theories to the creation of characters.

The staff of the *Daily News*, mainly American with, I believe, two British sub-editors, includes national reporters who speak fluent English. Quick-brained and eager, the Russian pressman makes swift and easy contacts. I found most of them intelligently curious as to conditions abroad, and especially keen on literary methods—the angle from which certain English authors were likely to approach a subject, my own particular

reactions, the whole gamut of the art and craft of writing. The eaglets of the profession have a wholesome respect for creative genius, and hold the novel in veneration. The Union of Soviet Writers sustains the line of demarcation between the author and the Press, and however brilliant the talent of a descriptive reporter, he cannot join the elect until he has had a book—belles-lettres, fiction, etc.—accepted and published.

Daily journals, like books, are printed on somewhat inferior paper. The *Moscow News*, however, is an exception—and from every point is thoroughly well turned out.

It is the only "English" paper available in the U.S.S.R. The import of foreign journals as a whole is prohibited. T.A.S.S., the Soviet News Agency, circulates items of general interest from the world's capitals, but there again the "copy" is censored. Russian censorship is amazingly unexpected and plumb full of vagaries. All outgoing and incoming foreign letters are opened and read and very clumsily sealed down again. If the contents are regarded as unsuitable, the letter passes into limbo. The same applies to books. So far as these are concerned, however, the U.S.S.R. generally returns them to the sender. It is practically impossible to determine just what kind of volume may escape detection. I have known cases where the English original of a work already translated into Russian, and actually on sale in the Soviet, has been rejected by the authorities. In every country the censorship department is vague, and the Russian variety is strictly to type. I should say that when in doubt "damn" is the official motto, and as doubt seems to reign supreme, few books escape the ban.

There is, however, a sure way of securing respectful treatment for the inoffensive printed word. Once establish reciprocity with a Soviet

department and your postal packets will get through—providing, of course, that the contents are in no way inimical to the State. Always the two threads are woven inextricably—mass organisation deflected by a persistent individuality—the one corrects the other. . . .

I found my nice old printer's devil waiting for me at the entrance. She took my hand in hers and together we went into Petrovsky, the long street that stretches from the centre of the town right into the suburbs. I did not know where she was leading me, but time was no object and I liked my guide amazingly. We threaded our way through alleys and court-yards, mean streets and wide squares, till we reached a bustling office built in modern style and brimful of activity. It was the headquarters of an American concern connected with machinery. My old lady walked straight in, looked round at a bevy of typists and beckoned to a pretty chic young Russian in a well-cut skirt and knitted jumper.

She came obedient to the signal, and introduced herself as my friend's granddaughter. Old Masha had been a valiant supporter of the revolution and had brought up her family in strict Bolshevik doctrine.

"She's really too old to work," said the girl in pure American, "but it would break her heart to do nothing. The committee of her Union decided a few months ago that she ought to retire—grandmother's just on eighty—and she would have quite a good pension, but she was most indignant at the idea. She stormed at the committee and threatened to complain to Stalin himself if they tried to shelve her, and believe me she'd have done it. Had they any complaint of the way she did her duties and all the rest of it? They couldn't say a word—indeed, they looked quite foolish—she is really wonderful, you know."

Masha listened to the story of her fight with quiet complacency—she would have recognised the saga in any or every language. She was good for another twenty years as a printer's devil in her own view, and I could see her waging a renewed struggle when, toothless, deaf and partially blind, the cringing committee should again suggest retirement.

There is no gainsaying the Amazon women of Russia—at any age. They cut through opposition like cheese. I always think of Masha when people talk to me of the suppression of Soviet standardisation. The running of human nature into a uniform mould? The whole of life built on the principle of a hive? Not a bit of it, the personal equation wins all the time! . . .

Masha took me back to the door of the hotel—she could not stay for a glass of tea, proofs were clamouring for delivery. She spoke at length, and I should say eloquently on things in general, and I listened uncomprehending but with respect. We smiled, clasped hands and parted—with regret.

CHAPTER XIV

"The Fruits of the Revolution"

INTERSPERSED between Congress meetings and rencontres in the Moscow streets I made sudden and joyous country excursions. One Saturday morning—it was an off day—I learnt in the usual breathless unexpectedness that an expedition had been arranged to a Communa for young people, between sixteen and twenty-five, who had been in prison. We set out in motor coaches through the old part of the city into the suburbs, where the small bug-ridden wooden houses gave way to modern brick tenements, pleasant open spaces and great markets, in which individual peasants and co-operative societies hold stalls. For miles, over amazingly good roads, we ran across a flat green country-side, dotted with congeries of dwellings, factories and schools. Small children herded cows, groups of cyclists—a new development in Russia—got in our way, aeroplanes continually passed overhead, until suddenly from the Soviet of to-day we lapsed into a track pitted with ruts and chasms, over which we jolted in a passage compared with which my *tellega* experiences in 1930 were smooth and mild.

A short distance ahead we came to easy transit once again. There are still lapses and discrepancies in the Soviet scheme of evolution, due to the hiatus in the country's general development. Russia has skipped a whole period of nineteenth-century "progress." Thus from the paraffin lamp and candle era she passed at one bound to electric

light. The gas epoch is missing from her social history save in isolated instances. In the same way, tractors have superseded oxen and a national appetite for reading has followed on a vast illiteracy. The spate of cheap journalism which followed on the establishment of our national education laws, has missed Russia altogether. The popular taste remains simple and good.

It was past midday when we reached the Colony, known as Bolshevo. Large buildings, spacious grounds, farm-houses, workshops and factories accommodate three thousand boys and girls, young men and women, married and single, with five hundred small kiddies belonging to the Colonists.

Bolshevo is a sanctuary for those tormented souls who cannot fit themselves into the general scheme of things. Soviet psychiatrists, like most modern sociologists, hold that juvenile delinquents steal, idle, tell lies, bully and behave in a generally undesirable fashion not from innate wickedness, but from some underlying weakness of which the most frequent are fear and a sense of inferiority bred of their environment. The essential thing is to locate the cause of the abnormality and then proceed to deal with it. The same method is adopted by that most understanding body, the London Police Court Mission, which by human understanding and a complete lack of condemnation has retrieved hundreds of ex-prisoners who otherwise would have drifted into semi-permanent gaol life.

During the years of the civil war thousands of homeless children, half starved and in rags, wandered about the country-side ; desperadoes in a small way they stole whenever they could, steadily refusing any attempt through charitable individuals or societies to regularise their lives or improve their condition. Avdeyenko gives a

graphic description of these bands in his novel, *I Love*. The child of a labourer, ill paid, over-worked, he was brought up in ghastly poverty and half-fed filth. One by one the family died of starvation and disease until at last only he and a brother and sister were left. Famished to death without a crumb of food, a stick of fuel, the poor things died crouching in a boiler which still retained the warmth from the last fire. Left utterly alone Avdeyenko joined a rebel band and stole and terrorised and starved and froze by turns. . . .

I found the key and meaning of Bolshevo in a rare moment of revelation. The school house—a tall building bright with wide windows—looks on a small but pleasantly green expanse. From the grass rise flowering shrubs and sweet-smelling bushes that cling and cluster round a huge block of granite—rough-hewn and barbaric. It attracted me and looking closer I became aware of an exquisitely carved head that like a flower rested on the rough rock. A sensitive face, with an infinite capacity for suffering, the mouth was compassionate, the forehead broad. The delicate features, the eloquent lips, reminded me somehow of Paderewski—an unmistakable Polish type.

I turned to a group of boys at play and pointing to the carving asked in dumb show who it could be.

I do not think I have ever experienced a greater shock of surprise than from the answer.

“Dzerzhinsky,” cried the young voices.
“Dzerzhinsky.”

It was he. The man who in the early years of the revolution ran the Cheka, the most powerful, the most dreaded police force in the world. His name in Western ears was spoken with shuddering hate. His deeds of violence, his reprisals and vengeance were splashed across the British Press in horrific headlines !

What place had Dzerzhinsky—the man with the face of a poet and the reputation of a torturer—in this sanctuary of peace?

The sun glinted on his face, the stone seemed actually to come alive. I recalled a story of his exile. He had been handcuffed for so long that when at last the revolution gave him liberty the unaccustomed muscles of his wrists could not respond.

"When you had dinner with Dzerzhinsky," said my informant, "his hands seemed somehow locked together. He was awkward with his knife and fork—if you asked him to pass the salt, he would take it between his two palms, one over the other. For him the chain between his wrists was always there. . . ."

I remembered also that as a brilliant youth he had been fêted and admired by Warsaw society. But he had given up home, safety and prospects for his country and in a desperate frenzy had joined the conspiracy against the Tsar. He was arrested and suffered all the insensate horrors of Siberian exile. And then when the weary years had taken their toll of his youth and the fine fire of sacrifice, when even his eagle spirit was bowed, came the amazing meteor-like rising of the people, and the Tsarist regime snapped like a taut string. The prisoners flocked to Moscow and Dzerzhinsky leapt to his place as Lenin's shadow. A shadow of steel—blood red, as Warsaw used to say in 1922. I remembered all the stories I had heard from those who had fled the Soviet, of Dzerzhinsky's sudden panther-like springs, the terror of his glance, his capacity—like an X-ray they said—for finding the unsuspected centre of a conspiracy. He was the avenging angel of the revolution, and after the attempt on Lenin's life—he never fully recovered from his wound—struck, and struck hard. Exquisitely sensible to the sufferings of others,

with a spirit so selfless that he could not abide inactive under the wrongs of his fellows, he could and did act with cold ferocity against the enemies of the people. The gospel of Lenin was his religion, his innermost belief for which he would have died a thousand deaths, and sent unflinching his nearest and dearest to the stake.

It was Madame Tretyakova who told me how he came to found Bolshevo.

"In the first days of the revolution, the streets of Moscow and of Leningrad were crowded with half-starved urchins. At night they used to sleep in the boilers used for the asphalt to repair the roads, in doorways, in sewers. They ran like human rats from question or discovery. It tore Dzerzhinsky's heart to see them. He was the kindest and gentlest of men, and he determined that these pitiful waifs and strays should have a home—in the real sense of the word—where they could recover from the cruelties of the world. More, he determined to apply all the efforts of the Cheka to looking after these homeless little ones. 'Flowers of life,' as he called them. He founded the Children's Communa at Kharkov and later established Bolshevo. It is his memorial. His name lives to-day among thousands of young things who have found their way back to sanity, and health, and are no more afraid . . ."

The working of the settlement was explained by the superintendent, a burly, comfortable-looking man, with a trim beard and pale blue eyes, beaming through thick glasses. He sat himself on a bench in the garden, the delegates clustering round like bees. The trouble was that there was no official interpreter for American or English and we were too much interested to be content with explanations in French. Tatiana Litvinoff, an intelligent young thing of sixteen, did her best though her translation was not fluent, but when

Lens, the Dutch novelist, appeared everything became easy. That young man was a marvel. He listened to the Russian and then and there without a moment's pause rendered it into English—one of the most astonishing linguistic feats I have ever listened to.

On leaving prison, youths of both sexes up to twenty-six years of age are asked if they would like to go to Bolshevo. There is no compulsion, nor is the Communa regarded in any sense as a penal centre. The members join voluntarily or not at all.

"We have no rules from the institutional point of view," explained the superintendent. "The place is run by a committee elected by the young people themselves. I act as a kind of Court of Appeal in cases of dispute. Members can and do go out after work into the nearest town or village, but they are required to be back before midnight, otherwise they would not be fit for the next day's work. They may drink, smoke, do what they like, but they must not make a disturbance when they come home, and if they wake the others or are quarrelsome, a committee is held and they are dealt with.

"New arrivals, after a medical examination, are put straight to constructive work on the land or in the factories or workshops," he went on. "No time is lost in preliminary training—knocking in endless nails, fixing interminable rivets, sweeping yards, etc. The most important thing is for the young Communard to feel he has achieved something creative. It means, of course, that a certain amount of material is spoilt. A boy's first shoe is probably unwearable, his output in an engineering shop equally bad, but the monetary loss is more than balanced by the temperamental gain. On the boy or girl who has never 'made' anything, a concrete achievement has a wonderful effect. A

sense of inferiority is replaced by legitimate pride. A definite step in development has been taken.

"We have a large Collective Farm, printing works, basket manufacturing and weaving industries, in addition to boot and shoe and engineering plants. Trade Union wages are paid, out of which members contribute the cost of their upkeep, and we have our own hospital, theatre and library. Bolshevo is, indeed, a microcosm of the outside world in which everyone has their particular niche."

"What if the new-comers are illiterate?" I asked.

"They go to evening classes. The cost of their schooling comes out of the communal fund to which they pay in later out of their earnings."

There is a masculine majority at Bolshevo, girl desperadoes are less numerous. There are, however, a number of married couples in the settlement, which includes big nurseries and playgrounds.

These playgrounds are a paradise for children. Here are no elaborate toys or mechanical dolls, contrivances of the latest make. All the amusements appeal to native imagination and initiative; pleasant grassy spaces, fenced in with palings, contain the beginnings of a tunnel into which toddlers can burrow and play at explorers on a desert island, or rabbits in a warren. These small, lovely little creatures, from infants in arms to six-year-olds, remain all day in the nurseries, open air and otherwise, but go home to sleep. The mothers work on the farm or in the factories, as do the fathers; most of these married couples have thrown in their lot with the Communa for good and all.

The children at their games ran to meet us. I was wearing some bright beads and the sparkle caught their eyes and their curiosity. I was

surrounded by small boys and girls, laughing, joyous, eager and unafraid. Small fingers clasped at the beads, small faces were raised to kiss me—it was one of the most fragrant moments of my life. Spontaneous, natural, not one of the children had an institutional taint. Each was a separate entity.

Apart from what seemed an excellent administration, the determining factor of Bolshevo to me was the attitude and outlook of the inhabitants. The first I could judge for myself. Strong, healthy, smiling, I found no hang-dog looks or furtive jeers among the young comrades. During the dinner hour—we sat down and enjoyed potato soup, an excellent meat batter and a rich pie, with plenty of perry and cider to drink—they talked and laughed quite freely, made friends with every one of us, and would have liked to converse, but, alas! only Lens could do that.

It was he who was able to tell me just how these ex-gaolbirds felt. The rest of the party had gone to inspect an up-to-date laboratory and we found ourselves behind.

"I do wish I knew just how Bolshevo affects a boy," I said.

"If you went off with some of them by yourself they'd talk. I'll fade out and leave you with them."

He strolled off with two lads, a sturdy fair-haired young giant, and a slim, dark, artistic-looking youth. Later he told me their history.

"The fair one has been in prison twice—he belonged to a gang and half liked, half hated the life. He stuck to it because, frankly, he's lazy. He said so. He'd rather do anything than work. After his second sentence the prison people asked what he was going to do.

" 'Go back to the gang,' said he."

" 'That means you'll be caught again and sent back to prison. Next time you'll get a longer



“JOYOUS, EAGER AND UNAFRAID”

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blackguards have risen to posts of grave responsibility and power in the outside world. The very characteristics that kept them to a career of adventurous, if chequered crime, differently canalised, have evoked qualities of stable leadership and sacrificial endeavour.

The complete lack of authoritative compulsion at Bolshevo is probably the key to its achievement.

"If you want to stay, stay ; if not, then clear out," may be described as the Colony's motto. The plan works admirably and, generally speaking, most of the human complexes come unravelled.

"But," as the superintendent told us, "sometimes a Communard grows restless and feels he must go. He is free to do so. These cases are very few. Last year there were only ten, and the year before a dozen, and of those several asked to return and are still with us. We have not time here to concentrate upon ourselves. The day's work is arduous and interesting, and in the evening there are dances, music, dramatic performances and debates. Theatrical companies from Moscow come down to entertain us, and there are two or three amateur societies going strong. We have, of course, our 'wall' newspaper and our local poets, painters and novelists. Some of the boys have done so well that they are to be drafted to the Moscow Universities."

Moral relapse within the Communa is rare. It would, indeed, be difficult successfully to steal at Bolshevo, where possessions have more personal than intrinsic value. Moreover, public opinion is strong, and to take a comrade's belongings raises such a storm of obloquy that the game is not worth the candle.

The desire for lawlessness seems, indeed, deliberately to fade under conditions of freedom. There is no need to break bounds with all doors

open, and if you have a grievance you need not bottle it up. You may call a meeting, unburden yourself and cite your aggressor, who, in his turn, will be heard. Imagine the result of this kind of treatment on a Borstal Boy, enraged by some slight, imaginary or actual, put on him by an official. In Russia authority is not regarded as sacrosanct. An inquest may be held on the most important personage.

The sex business seems also to have arranged itself at Bolshevo. Girls, as I have said, are in a minority, but as a rule the boys prefer to choose their friends, sweethearts and wives farther afield. Our fair-haired comrade was "walking out" with a damsel from the neighbouring village. He might marry her, but, again, he might not ! In any case, there is no supervision, the boys and girls of the Communa go about together as they like.

This freedom, however, does not send up the unwedded birth-rate to any extent. There are a few unmarried mothers at Bolshevo, but the majority prefer a husband with their child ; while the young men in the knowledge that, married or not, a third of their earnings will be scheduled for the infant's upkeep, are not conspicuous Don Juans.

Physiological facts are treated with an openness and honesty that discount all those evasions and inhibitions that too often injure adolescence.

We visited a hall in which sketches and pictures, the work of some of the boys, were shown. Several were tame in conception and in execution, feeble examples of still life, pretty-pretty water colours and unoriginal black-and-whites. But in sudden startling contrast you would find a virile nude, in which the fundamental masculine was proudly depicted. A splendid naked figure on a hill-side, lying by a camp fire. Here were no discreet draperies, no imaginative fig-leaves, the male,

dominant and triumphant, sinless and without shame; Adam before the fall.

The execution was amazingly good in these studies, while an unspoilt sense of decorative values animated unconventional paintings of country scenes, sprawling branches of fierce reds and splendid yellows, a queer rhythm of field flowers.

The dark lad who also gave his confidence to Lens was a poet. He had passed through some desperate times in his early life, had lived as a child in a cellar, without light or heat, and like a wild beast had fought for food and drink. His verses tried to express the sufferings of his small body, the complete gloom of his soul. They had been published in a local paper, and a Leningrad author had noticed them and told him to send everything he wrote for advice and correction. I thought as I listened that the self-sacrifice of the author was amazing !

The married quarters at Bolshevo are modern, comfortable and up-to-date. Two to three rooms are apportioned to each family, according to size, and young couples commencing their career have to be content with one. Some households cook their own food, but the majority, even if they eat at home, fetch it from the communal kitchen. Others prefer their meals in the restaurant. Temperament and taste decide.

We left the Communa late in the afternoon, accompanied by a group of young enthusiasts who swarmed on the coach and saw us on our way for some few miles. My last glance was at Dzerzhinsky, lying peaceful and aloof among the flowering shrubs.

Implacable, compassionate, gentle as the softest breeze, virulent as a scourge, he is one of the paradoxes of his period. His picture, painted with the colours of the pit in Western Europe, glows with

the bright soft hues of an idealist in his spiritual home. The passionate young Pole, whose soul was rent by the sufferings of his poor countrymen, travelled a long way before he found his final rest.

“ The fruits of the revolution,” said he, “ are not for us, but for the children ! ” . . .

CHAPTER XV

The Rock of the Soviet

NEW Moscow for all its fascination is not fundamental to Soviet existence. The rock on which Stalin has built is, and must remain the Kolkhoz or Collectivist Farm. I had visited many of these in 1930, bringing away unforgettable pictures of a life among simple kindly people, all working for the common good, each receiving full recognition of individual rights and liberties, and I was eager to see again how these pleasant places had progressed, the actual alterations or improvements that had taken place.

Now farms in Russia always seem to lie off the beaten track, miles from the railway, where country roads, still quite primitive, are fit only for the *tellega* or springless cart. We managed, however, to negotiate a car to within a short distance of a big fruit and vegetable Communa in the Moscow region. I was accompanied by an American delegate with an unassuageable thirst for figures and a Russian who before the revolution had lived in London. An accomplished person, he was attached to V.O.K.S., and among other duties was occasionally told off to "explain" things to visitors, sometimes more than a little vague as to Soviet politics and personalities. One of his most joyful recollections concerned an elderly English woman of considerable wealth and Royalist tendencies. He was showing the party over the church near the Kremlin which includes the tomb of Ivan the Terrible and those of his victims. One

after the other the tale of Ivan's assassinations went on—his son, his nephew, his friend—the lady listened attentively and then with a sympathetic smile enquired why the tomb of the late dear Tsar was not included ! . . .

The farm, called after Lenin—the name, planted in yellow asters, flamed against green fields—specialises in early vegetables, hot-house fruit and flowers. Acres of glass, electrically heated, supply water-melons—which pre-revolution had to be imported—early peas, beans and carrots ; underground chambers grow mushrooms and truffles, while roses and carnations are everywhere. The manager, a clever little man with a scientific degree, showed us round.

The communal dining-room, used also for concerts, etc., lit and heated by electricity, was fitted with a radio. Hand-made rugs were on the floor, kelims as they are called, and flowers on the tables. The food—dinner was just over—included soup, beef, potatoes, onions and green vegetables and apples, and there was cider to drink as well as tea. The menu, with pork, veal and occasional chicken, is the usual one for agricultural centres. Butter also is now generally used, as is cheese—both were practically nil on the country-side in 1930.

“ This is an old farming centre,” said the little manager. “ Before the revolution the ground was held and cultivated by individual peasants, each on his own plot. They earned a bare living and worked incessantly. After 1917 they got together, pooled their land and their tools and their money and started a Collective. It has gone on growing ever since.”

The families who work on this particular Kolkhoz live in their own cottages and keep their own cattle, pigs and chickens. Husbands, wives and kiddies generally take their midday meal at the

farm. The unmarried workers who sleep on the premises have full board at cost price.

The women's dormitories were pleasant, airy places with whitewashed walls, iron bedsteads, good mattresses, sheets and blankets and brightly coloured quilts. There were gay rugs on the floor, pictures and photographs were neatly hung and jugs of flowers stood on small bedside tables.

Some of the women were resting, others were knitting. A pretty, fair-haired girl in blue jumper and skirt was talking to an old woman in a white kerchief and black shawl.

The girl gave me a beaming smile of welcome.

"You like this place?" she questioned in excellent English. She told me she was an agronomist and had been sent to the Communa as a special shock worker to speed up the output. A member of the Young Communist Party, under their auspices she had learnt English and French, trained in agriculture and psychology and now a finished product was ready to their hands.

She was nineteen years of age, fair-haired and dimpled, vitalised and efficient.

"This is my mother," she said, turning to the old lined woman at her side. The face, tired and sallow, was graven with endless effort, but the eyes were bright and the mouth was strong.

"I've been trying to persuade mother to join our Collective," said Natasha. "But she won't listen—no matter what I say. She and my father live about twelve miles away, so she'd be in the same district and could always see her friends. But it's no use!" She looked half sad and half impatient. "I've only seen my mother twice since I left home—I was only twelve then. It's an awful home," she said bitterly, "with great cracks in the walls and a hole in the roof, so that the wet continually drips in. My mother and father work from daybreak and at night they've only a dirty, miserable bed to go to.

Here they could be so comfortable and happy. But they won't budge. If you'll believe it, mother won't even use electric light—she sticks to a horrid, smelly, old paraffin lamp."

"Perhaps she's too old to be uprooted," I suggested.

"But her life's so wretched. She never goes anywhere and barely has enough to eat." She turned to the survival of a dead generation and I gather began once more to plead. But the mother remained obstinate. She did not argue, she simply would not, or could not, admit the possibility of change. They were the most amazing comment on the two eras—the epitome of yesterday and to-day, the eager girl, the resistant old woman. Both inveterate workers, the one athirst for knowledge, eager for trial and experiment in every phase of existence, the other welded to a routine which had ground out of her even the desire for better things. She had been yoked to servitude for so long that like a prisoner used to the limits of a cell, the world outside terrified and cowed her.

Natasha's mother typifies thousands of peasants in Soviet Russia who cannot reconcile themselves to the new regime. Their lot is pitiful, but to uproot them would sentence them to die. Slowly but inevitably they are disappearing. Their children go to the cities or join a Collective Farm, and once the old people have disappeared there will be no one to take their place. Meanwhile, the sufferings and the penalties of this class are vitally interwoven with the political fabric of Soviet Russia, and are, I think, responsible for the persistent rumour of Soviet starvation. Later, I discovered what actually happens as between the individual peasant and the Kolkhoz. . . .

I left Natasha with the Tsarist relic and went on to the Bachelor quarters—clean, bare and emin-

ently workmanlike, with plenty of books, "wall" newspapers, and some amateur drawings. For the next hour I walked through fields of cabbage and lettuce, stumbled over cucumber frames, lost myself in acres of asters, chrysanthemums and sweet-smelling phlox. The produce sold to a Co-operative Wholesale Society is delivered in lorries each morning to the depôt in the nearest town. The contract includes the entire output and the price is settled by the Control Board.

The earnings of an average worker, man or woman, on a Kolkhoz, amount to about 250 roubles a month. In addition they receive a yearly dividend on their shares which they have bought in the concern, plus a bonus from the profits, i.e. the difference between the expenses of production, upkeep, etc., and sale. Only those who work on the farm may hold shares, the outside public are ineligible, thus eliminating any possibility of making profit out of labour in which the investor takes no part. This is not all. The system of the factory holds good also on the farm. In both cases output is speeded up to a frenzied degree.

The manager explained the system very simply.

"We have not only a working day on a Kolkhoz," said he, "but a labour day. Suppose I—or any other farm manager—estimates that it would take five working days of ten hours each to do a certain job—plant a field of so many acres, build a hot-house, drain a yard, do any of the thousand and one agricultural jobs. Well, if the men do the work in the allotted time, they are paid their ordinary wages. But a *udarnik* or shock worker will do better than that. He may finish off his share in half the time, i.e. so many labour days within the working day. This will entitle him to a special rate of pay—additional to his wages. The bigger the output per labour day, the higher the rate. We

usually fix the scale at the end of the financial year—after the harvest.”

The udarniks, as I have said, are usually recruited from the Communist Party. There are, however, a percentage of foreign shock workers whose achievements are well up to the national scale. It is a nigger-driving system, designed to counteract the slow-moving methods of the old regime. The younger generation are already imbued with the speed virus. In a few years the pace at both ends will probably have evened up and a comfortable mien of activity be arrived at.

Generally speaking, farm shock workers, like the factory type, have a temperamental driving force rather than physical power. They accomplish miracles, but their tonic value to those of slower blood is far more valuable than their actual achievements. You may distinguish a udarnik not by his superior height, breadth or muscular endowment, but in the strained, almost tragic keenness of bearing, the weary yet illumined eyes, the quick, nervous movements of the figure and the hands.

“Suppose a peasant wants to join another Kolkhoz, does he have to leave his cattle, etc., behind ? ” asked the American.

“Not without compensation,” said the manager. “He receives the value in cash, together with the current interest on his shares, which he may sell to another member of the Communa. If, however, he leaves before the harvest he can only receive the value of his beasts. He must wait until the autumn for his dividends.”

The output at this particular farm has increased 50 per cent during the past two years, through improved methods of production and speeding up.

It was while I was “examining” a wonderful crop of carrots that a group of tourists arrived. There is a certain type common to all nations who, when in foreign parts, seem more eager to impart

information as to the country they are visiting than to receive impressions or listen to facts! Our visitors included two earnest, lean young men from the School of Economics, an obliging Belgian and an elderly man who looked like a banker and gazed at the country-side with hungry eyes. The two Londoners, breathless and eager, did not wait for any information, but seizing on the interpreter, informed the manager, through him, as to the average output of a vegetable Kolkhoz, with so many other items of his business that, somewhat dazed, the little man decided that the turnips needed his immediate attention, and hurried away. Hastily following, I found myself accompanied by the elderly banker. Suddenly he paused, put his hand on the manager's arm and in beautiful Russian began to speak breathlessly and with emotion.

I listened, imagining many things—some of which were true. He was an *émigré*, who in the first throes of the revolution had fled the country, leaving his land and much of his money behind. He had made more, however, in Paris, where his banking connections (I gave myself a mark for spotting his financial status) helped him and he joined a profitable investment company. Furthermore, he had become a naturalised Frenchman. And now, after seventeen years, he was back in the land of his birth.

My friend the interpreter—leaving the economic ones to the care of a girl from Intourist, with instructions to lead them far away—had joined us, and later he told me what had passed. The banker pelted our little man with questions as to production costs, living costs and the rest. He looked with interest—and surprise—at the well-kept fields, the amazing crops and then suddenly broke into an odd mixture of invective and regret. It was his country and he had abjured it. The revolution had driven him away—prevented him from taking his

place in this new, this amazing Russia. His thin, sensitive face whitened with emotion, his nostrils quivered, he was engulfed in a passion of regret, reproach and unavailing agony.

I have seen others suffering as he suffered. Immediately after the revolution, refugees from the Soviet were received with such welcome and *réclame* in Western Europe that they felt they were heroes and martyrs. Moreover, they regarded themselves as merely temporary visitors. The Soviet, they insisted with the rest of Europe, would not last. In a few years the Government would collapse and Tsarism once more be established. With the inevitable waning of first enthusiasm these unhappy people found themselves in emotional and financial difficulties. Under a League of Nations passport they were, and are, immune from the ordinary regulations, which require them to report their movements at the nearest police station, but the barriers of temperament and language remain, and moreover, the Soviet, instead of falling, has become firmly established. What they had regarded as a temporary change of domicile has hardened into permanent exile. The banker, like hundreds of others, had awakened to find himself alien in every sense.

He had been born in a village quite close to the Communa, and asked eagerly after places and people. Most of his friends, like him, had disappeared, but there were others who had thrown in their lot with the Soviet and were established Communist officials. Long after his curiosity was satisfied he continued to talk to the little manager, hating, envying everything for which the Soviet stood, trying to disprove the evidence of his eyes, his trained observation, yet hungering insatiably for the sound of his native tongue, with its silken strength, soft beauty and amazing rhetoric.

He would return to Paris, one felt, with his heart filled with bitterness and regret, and the knowledge that his land—"I *want* my land," as I overheard a young *émigré* say—was closed to him save as a stranger. . . .

By this time the manager felt he had given enough of his life to answering enquiries, and the American having filled his note-book with the yield per hectare under various kinds of manure and other world-shaking facts—we departed.

I visited other Collectives further afield. In every case there was the same improvement in diet and dress. Electric light and power were everywhere installed, the most remote corners familiar with the daily airplane.

Most of the sowing in Soviet Russia is done from the air, by a gyroscopic plane that hovers close to the ground and disperses the seed meticulously and regularly as though the mechanism had an actual sense of distance and touch. Tractors are still held in high esteem, but their almost religious worship has abated. As a whole they are better looked after and less ill-used than when I was last in Russia. It is undoubtedly true that these valuable machines were gravely mishandled at the start, but mechanical knowledge has considerably increased and with it the percentage of wreckage proportionally decreased.

The harvest of 1934 was a variable one. In some districts the crops were very heavy—in others there was a partial failure due to the drought. In the Ukraine the average was as good as in 1933, in the Caucasus the yield was feeble, though irrigation saved a considerable portion.

The weather all over the U.S.S.R. was curiously partial, heavy rainfalls being confined to quite small areas. As a whole, the results are below the bumper figures of the previous year, but considerably above 1932.

Collective Farms of every kind are taxed from

20 per cent to 25 per cent of their gross produce, according to the fertility of the land. In bad years, when through drought, seed failure, etc., the yield is small, a rebate is granted by the Agricultural Commission. Further, in difficult times, a Kolkhoz can always obtain loans on extended credit from the State banks at 7 per cent.

The State Farms, or Solkhoz, are of course outside taxation. A balance sheet is published yearly, however, and if a concern does not show a profit there is trouble, the management is changed, the workers "analysed"—business is business in the Soviet and farming enterprises like industrial must stand firmly on their own financial feet. The employees on a kolkhoz, wage-earners as apart from Co-operative shareholders, are generally recruited from those townsfolk who prefer the land to the factory and a proportion of peasants who choose routine rather than the responsibility of a Collective, where everyone feels concerned with the general well-being as apart from their own personal performance. State Farms are established for the most part on the estates held by the big land-owners under the Tsar. Collective Farms are an aggregation of peasant holdings in which not only land, but beasts and tools have been pooled.

This, though a general custom, is varied in the smaller Communas, where—as in the case of the vegetable farm already noted—the members retain their own livestock, cattle, pigs, poultry, which they sell for their own profit at the nearest towns in open market, which means at decontrolled prices. In open market indeed the old custom of bargaining holds good, and you run up and down the scale of roubles until at last a mean is struck. In 1930 the sale of butter, meat and poultry was prohibited, the Government taking over all supplies. To-day, however, there are few restrictions—the peasant may sell anything he likes. Prices in open

market are generally in excess of the stores, but while butter, meat, etc., are still rationed at the Co-operatives, there is no limit to what you may buy off the stalls.

Foreign visitors under the auspices of Intourist have no food problems. They receive their hotel meal-tickets daily. Those, however, who prefer to wander unshepherded through the country have to make their own arrangements, and usually purchase supplies in open market. This is not the cheapest mode of living ; at the present rate of exchange the most Spartan regime is dear, while even small accessories reach a terrifying figure.

This was brought home to me one evening at the "Metropole." I was sitting in the lounge when an American lady ran towards me bearing a small paper parcel. She was most upset, a little incoherent and obviously looking for a sympathetic ear.

"It may be a terrible thing that Soviet children are taught that there's no God," she exclaimed, "but my quarrel with the Government is that they make me pay seventy-five kopecks for a lemon." She shook the parcel in my face. "I've waited three days for one, and now when I've gotten it, the thing's *shrivelled*."

Lemons are not included in the hotel menu, and occasionally the supply falls short ; a fact which I was told elicits bags and bags of remonstrance from the citizens of the United States who park themselves in Moscow for a casual look see.

The lady of the lemon was succeeded by an amazing woman of sixty who runs one of the largest, most up-to-date Collectives in the Black Earth region. She had expressed a wish to meet me, and through a guide gave a spirited account of her life. She had been one of the first in her village to favour the Collective, and literally drove her husband into pooling their land and cattle with the rest. He was not, I should say, a man of

pronounced vigour and while by sheer force of personality she became a leading light of the district, he was left standing. Ultimately, this Russian Boadicea was elected manager of a Kolkhoz of one thousand five hundred souls, and lo ! and behold, under her rule the crops yielded well, the cattle did better, the output increased and the men and women performed prodigies of effort. This vigorous leader, who since the revolution had learnt to read and write, keep accounts and rear chickens on a scientific system, stood before me and challenged me to find a man who would have done what she had achieved.

"This will be the third year I've been elected manager," she said proudly, "and I've been decorated three times. I never thought I should live to see the day when I was praised in the newspapers. . . . Before the revolution I worked like a horse and was always hungry. I hadn't a whole dress to my back and my children went bare-foot. Now we live in fine rooms, have good clothes and my eldest son is training for an army officer . . . thanks to Lenin," she added, "he's given us everything."

Pride radiated from her until at the mention of that ineffable name she grew suddenly humble—yet exalted.

I accompanied the tall, upstanding figure across the room into the vestibule. I would have given a great deal to have seen the husband of this magnificent Amazon—before whom in the old days she was as an ox, or an ass !

As she neared the swing door opening on to the street, a shuffling little figure of a man joined her, carrying a huge bundle of apples and pears. She looked him over with a tilt of the eye, straightened his collar, put on his hat—and grasping the bundle, pushed him through the door.

Perhaps, after all, feminine psychology does not change so very much !

CHAPTER XVI

"The mill cannot grind with the water that is past"

IN estimating social and economic life in Russia it is essential to examine some of the most persistent criticisms of the country, fundamental and sectional. Since the establishment of the Soviet regime, it has been continuously stated that the wholesale export of wheat leaves the people hungry, and that many die of starvation. It is, I suppose, our national ignorance of foreign countries that is responsible for the part acceptance of this statement. Those who have any knowledge of the facts must be aware that Russian peasants, like the Czech, Jugo-Slav, Polish and German, do not eat wheaten bread, but, as they have done for generations, subsist on rye—the brown, nourishing loaf which you find in the smallest cottage as on the largest Collective Farm.

There has been starvation in Russia, due not only to the bad harvests, but to the shortage of meat and poultry from 1929 to 1931. This was the result of a mistaken policy on Stalin's part. A townsman by birth, a student by education—he was designed for the priesthood—he did not realise the immovable resistance of the older peasantry born and bred under the Tsarist regime. Land hunger is deeply rooted in the Slav and the *moujiks* joined the revolution because the programme included the sharing-out of the farms owned by the *kulaks* among themselves. Once in possession of the land, however, no arguments would induce

them to hold it communally. The idea of Co-operative ownership was outside their mental grasp. They clung with passion to their few poor acres. The younger generation flocked to the Collectives. The old people stayed behind.

Stalin, impatient and a little contemptuous, decided to break their resistance. He unloosed his reserves. Young Communists harried the countryside with fervid propaganda ; the police made visits of inspection ; the military were conspicuously in being. The peasants neither argued nor fought. They took a more effective and more terrible way. Rather than join the local Kolkhoz and pool their goods, they destroyed them. They burnt their oats and rye and wheat, slaughtered 50 per cent of their cattle, pigs and poultry—and sentenced the whole country to semi-starvation.

Stalin did not need to learn his lesson twice. He wisely accepted defeat, called off his missionaries, and the old folk were left in peace. The sequel was a ghastly shortage of meat and fodder, so that for the next few years Russia lived on bread and tea. Now, however, the cattle supply equals the demand and the nation is well fed.

The individual peasant, however, still remains unliquidated. He has indeed a tough struggle to keep alive. Taxed up to 35 per cent of his gross yield, he may not appeal to the Agricultural Commission for a rebate and no bank would grant him a loan. He works, moreover, by old-fashioned methods and worn-out tools, so that his crops cannot equal those of the Kolkhoz where they use up-to-date machinery, fertilisers and the rest. If the harvest is bad, by the time the tax is paid there is little or nothing to live on, and the unfortunate man and woman—the children have all gone to the Collective—are faced with the prospect of something like famine. It is these people, but a fifth of the rural population,

whose photographs appear in the British Press as everyday victims of Soviet tyranny. They do go hungry and some of them, in extreme cases, half starve, but to represent these unhappy products of a system into which they cannot fit as ordinary typical inhabitants of the country-side is to fail utterly, and often wilfully, to apprehend the actual facts of what is happening. Outside the millions and millions of land workers in the Soviet Republics, they represent a single and rapidly dwindling class.

The policy of the Government is aimed deliberately at the extinction of the individual peasantry by taxing them out of existence, i.e. driving them into the Collective Farms. But though they realise the intention and feel the consequences, they do not budge an inch from their decision. They will not—indeed they cannot—collectivise, and until their breed dies out, say in another ten or fifteen years' time, they will remain the pivot of attack upon the Soviet system.

One is terribly sorry for these poor old relics. Frugal, industrious, changeless in their resistance, they move you to admiration and despair. But only for to-day. To-morrow the leaking roofs and smelly oil lamps will have disappeared, and with them the survivals of a hard, self-rooted and half-starved existence. Only death will separate them from the plot on which for the barest subsistence they have lavished the strength and the emotion of their living years. For they cannot, they do not know how to co-operate ; that is at once their tragedy and their excuse.

No restriction is placed on the sale of produce either by the individual peasants or the Collective Farms once the grain tax is paid. The latter sell to the local Co-operative stores or the wholesale dealers. The former take their goods to open market and get as much as people are prepared to

pay. The question of transport hits the small man hard. He has to take his goods to the railway either by hand or in a *tellega* and risk the chance that the stuff may not be despatched for an indefinite period. The farms, however, send their produce by lorry to the nearest depot, where it is collected.

Transport in the country districts as in the towns is still inadequate, and as a consequence supplies continually get held up, or go astray. This cannot, I think, in justice be laid against Collectivism, but should be charged to the long years of neglect and almost complete lack of internal development pre-revolution. Trains are more punctual than when I was in Russia four years ago, and although the railway service is still disorganised, it is improving. Moreover, civil aviation has forged miles ahead of any other country. But it is not in Russia alone that distribution fails, for every waggon-load of wasted produce I can recall an entire orchard of rotting apples on our beautiful English countryside. I have waded ankle-deep among the fruit, which it did not pay our farmers even to pick—though the market price in London ran to sixpence a pound. The Soviet, for all its shortcomings, does not deliberately waste on the one hand while it profiteers on the other.

Another point of criticism concerns the ephemeral character of Soviet buildings. Housing construction is not all that can be wished, though most of the flimsy structures of the early years have been demolished and reset on firmer foundations. But this also is one of the consequences of a bad tradition in regard to working-class houses. Time is rectifying the defects of enthusiastic if ill-organised effort. The Soviet started its campaign of housing with only a handful of skilled men, but to-day bricklayers and masons learn their trade.

In this connection I feel I should quote a recent

case recorded in the newspapers. A widowed woman with three children invested her all—some two hundred and fifty pounds—in a house, the balance of the price to be paid by monthly instalments. The purchaser received a guarantee of solidity for a year, but in the eleventh month of tenancy one of the walls fell down and a portion of the roof collapsed. The unfortunate woman endeavoured to get her case heard before the guarantee expired, the defendants meanwhile doing all they could to postpone it. Meanwhile the children with their mother were living in a partially demolished house—for which they'd paid a considerable sum !

This, I may mention, took place not in Russia, but in a London suburb !

It is alternatively urged that Russia has destroyed the right of private property and has perpetuated the worst evils of Capitalism. It seems worth while to explain the actual economic condition which governs private ownership of wealth. No individual may *own* land, house or industrial plant. A peasant or a Kolkhoz may rent land—for which they pay grain tax—and a townsman may rent a house in a city, a village, or both. But furniture, books, pictures, jewellery, furs, garments and other portable articles may be and are the actual property of their possessors. Motor-cars may also be owned. Money may be accumulated either by individual earnings or salary or by the dividends on Co-operative share holdings or the interest on State loans. Moreover, subject to a heavy death duty, you may leave your money to your children.

"What is the difference between *that* and Capitalism," an indignant publicist asked the other day. "Where are the Communist ideals of the revolution ?"

As I see it, the fundamental distinction between

the U.S.S.R. and the rest of the world still remains. You may not make profit from the wealth produced by others. Only those who actually take part in an enterprise may own shares or draw dividends.

The first flush of an idealism that postulated man's inherent equality of gifts and framed a society in which everyone received the same reward without distinction, has inevitably given place to a realism which admits the existence of the less and the more gifted, and fixes their economic or artistic value proportionately. But equality of opportunity still continues. The sweeper remains a sweeper only so long as he is content with that state of life. If and when he desires a change he may aspire to whatsoever lot he chooses. Facilities are always open for self-development. I have heard it argued that the difference in the pay between the skilled and unskilled has destroyed the idea of proletarian control, and that the opportunities of advancement in the United States—before the depression—equalled any prospects under the Soviet, while both systems postulate a residuum of wage slaves. But while in the States the race was only to the strong, the more scrupulous or timorous being forced on to the scrap heap, in the Soviet there is not a *status quo* : servitude is no inheritance.

At the same time occupational discrimination has appeared. In the restaurants attached to every factory or commercial enterprise, the directorate will gravitate to one table, the management to another and so on through the whole unit. The division, entirely voluntary, is often broken, friends will sit by friends though they belong to different sections. But from the civic point of view there is no fundamental distinction, at any time—given the will and the intelligence—an unskilled workman may become a chief of department, just as a

chief—if his work fall short—may be deposed. You never can tell.

Standardisation of food is at an end. Meals vary according to the income of the diner. There is a menu to suit all purses and all tastes. Indeed, it will not, I think, be long before food tickets of all descriptions will be done away with. Already the bread-card has been abolished, which means that the general agricultural output has not only increased, but has been so regulated that supply adequately meets demand and bread may be bought in a large or small quantity as the consumer wishes.

You may still find occasional shortage of provisions, but that is owing to faults in transport, not in any sense to lack of food.

The question of religious worship in the Soviet has, I should say, been more clouded by inaccuracy of statement than any other issue. There are two churches in Moscow—both of which I attended—where Greek ritual continues undisturbed. Pre-revolution there were many other places of worship—in the capital as in the country—which no longer exist; that is beyond question. The priesthood has also been depleted by banishment, imprisonment and execution. But the fact remains—of my personal knowledge and experience—that throughout White Russia and the Ukraine numbers of Greek Orthodox churches still continue to officiate, and their priests and congregations are left unhindered to pursue their faith. Some establishments have closed automatically for lack of funds. In the absence of State endowment, the upkeep of the building and the stipend of the priest comes from the subscriptions of the faithful. If these fall below subsistence level, the Government takes over and the place becomes either a museum or is reconstructed as workers' dwellings. Priests as such are not liable under the law. They

are subject to the death penalty if they are held to have preached *contra*-revolutionary doctrines.

It is, I think, undoubted that Stalin would have liked to suppress the Deity and His acknowledgment throughout the Republics, but here again the national psychology has defeated him. Stalin, one must remember, comes from Georgia, which, from 1801 when it was annexed by the Tsar, was perpetually in revolt until its inclusion as an independent Republic in the U.S.S.R. The arrangement, which satisfied the national feeling of the people, left unmodified the temperamental clash between them and the Slavs. And Stalin, in origin and character the Georgian, fierce and relentless, has not a touch of mysticism in his make-up and shares little of that unflinching Russian passivity which can successfully oppose the most violent impact. Thus he misjudged the peasants in the matter of God as he had misjudged them in regard to small-holdings. In both cases the minority have won. They retain their land and the Almighty also—and Stalin cannot make them give up either. But while the individual peasants will leave no one to take their place on the soil, they will hand on their knowledge of Christianity to the younger generation.

This, however, is true only of a percentage of the population. There is, at the same time, a strong anti-religious drive, which finds expression in anti-God museums, where the bones of saints, etc., held to have worked miracles, are exposed to ridicule, anti-God meetings and a whole liturgy of atheistical doctrine, impregnated with the force and fervour of illimitable faith !

To the casual visitor this anti-God business appears to express the feeling of Russia as a whole. Impartial observation will reveal a different state of affairs.

In this as in other things, Soviet Russia appears a contradiction. We read of starving millions and of huge populations living in peace and plenty. Wholesale executions and imprisonments are reported, political prisoners wiped out by a stroke of the pen, while criminals are treated with a patient understanding and a magnanimity without parallel. It is all true, but no one phenomenon is the whole truth. You cannot generalise as to Russian conditions, but can only note underlying trends.

Certain characteristics, however, seem common to the peoples of the Union as a whole. Everywhere I found the same keenness in regard to both local and general affairs, a civic spirit intensely vigorous and alert. With this is the consciousness of the national tendency to slackness—which accounts for the terrifically high tension of the *udarniks*, who like the seers of old lash their souls to a frenzy of energy.

Interest as to foreign countries there is very little—with the exception of America, which is regarded as the Mecca of modern mechanism. There is also an ingenuous belief in the priority of Soviet achievement in the founding of State clinics, kindergartens, day nurseries, etc. This, however, is not peculiar to the U.S.S.R. You find the same narrow self-glorification in the United States and Australia, while indifference to economic or political events abroad is one of the most notable British characteristics. How many people on meeting a foreigner for the first time want to hear about his country? The inevitable question is—what do they think of ours?

Meanwhile the emergence of Russia from the feudalism that postulated bad roads, illiteracy, lack of efficient social service, medieval dirt and insanitation, goes on apace—and with it a quickening of mentality and a perception of happiness,

curiously absent from the magnificent but gloomy literature of the Tsarist regime.

The people, with the country, are moving towards the full possibilities of existence. The sleeper has awakened—Russia that was dead has come, most gloriously, alive again.

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